



Doctorate in Educational Psychology

2015

Parent and child constructions of the primary- secondary school transition

Student name: Rhiannon Elizabeth Matthews

Part A: Major Research Literature Review

Part B: Research Journal Article

Part C: Reflective Summary

Declarations and Statements

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed  (candidate)

Date: 05.10.15

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DEdPsy

Signed  (candidate)

Date: 05.10.15

STATEMENT 2

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

Signed  (candidate)

Date: 05.10.15

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed  (candidate)

Date: 05.10.15

STATEMENT 4: PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BAR ON ACCESS

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans **after expiry of a bar on access previously approved by the Graduate Development Committee.**

Signed (candidate)

Date

Abstract

The transition from primary to secondary school has been identified as a critical moment in a child's educational career, which can have implications for their emotional well-being and educational and social outcomes. The majority of literature relating to transition has focused on three main areas; the effects of transition on academic attainment and well-being, pupil's experience of transition, and predictors of difficult transition. This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of pupils' transition experiences by exploring an area which is, to date, under-researched.

The study explores child and parent constructions relating to transition within a population of primary school pupils who have been identified as 'vulnerable'. A mixed method approach was utilised to explore parent and child constructions of the primary to secondary transition and whether transition anxiety differs in parent-child dyads that consist of an anxious parent or a non-anxious parent.

A sample comprising of 37 parent-child dyads from a single Local Authority participated in the first stage of research. The parents of these children were divided into two groups following the completion of the STAI; anxious parents and non-anxious parents. Each member of the dyad completed a quantitative measure of transition related concerns which were then statistically analysed in relation to the research questions.

In addition to the quantitative measures, 11 parent-child dyads participated in individual semi-structured interviews to further explore their construction related to transition. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Five themes were found: growth, information gathering, adaptation, struggling with discontinuity and feelings of hope.

The implications of findings are discussed in relation to the role of Educational Psychologists and Educational Professionals. Further directions for research are considered, alongside the limitations of the present study.

Summary

This thesis is formed of three parts; a systemic literature review, an empirical research study, and a reflective summary exploring the contribution to knowledge and a critical account of the research practitioner. Part A, the systemic literature review, seeks to explore and critically evaluate existing research relating to the primary to secondary school transition. It is accepted that transition is a period of substantial change for the majority of pupils, which often results in some form of anxiety (Topping, 2011) therefore research exploring anxiety related to the transition process is also critically evaluated. The literature review further considers how parental anxiety may have a significant impact upon child anxiety relating to transition.

Part B, the empirical research study, explores child and parent constructions relating to transition within a population of primary school pupils who have been identified as 'vulnerable' in regard to the transition process. A mixed method approach was utilised to explore whether parents and their child share similar constructs of transition, and whether parental anxiety significantly impacts upon child anxiety pertaining to transition. A sample comprising of 37 parent-child dyads from a single Local Authority participated in the first stage of research, which entailed completing quantitative measures. The parents of these children were divided into two groups; anxious parents and non- anxious parents, following the completion of the State Trait Anxiety Index. Each child and their parent completed a measure of transition concerns which were statistically analysed in relation to the research questions.

11 parent-child dyads participated in the second stage of research, where they engaged in individual semi-structured interviews to further explore their constructions related to transition. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

The implications of findings are discussed in relation to the role of Educational Psychologists and Educational Professionals. Further directions for research are suggested, alongside the limitations of the present study.

Part C, the critical appraisal, seeks to reflectively analyse the process of this research, including the development of the researcher. The contribution to knowledge will be discussed, alongside the relevance of findings to the EP profession.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to those who took part in this research. I appreciate your time and honesty in sharing how you felt about the transition journey.

My thanks to my research supervisor Dr Jean Parry and my personal tutor Dr Simon Claridge for supporting me through what has undoubtedly been the most challenging piece of academic work I have done to date. Your advice has always been greatly valued.

Thank you to my fellow trainees who have been an anchor of sanity during the past three years and who have helped me to navigate the doctorate with a smile on my face.

A huge thanks to my partner Duncan, who has unrivalled skill in remaining calm no matter what the circumstance. You have acted as a voice of reason during moments of panic and self-doubt. I appreciate your patience, your support, your confidence in me and your general wonderfulness. Here is to making the most of weekends...time to have some fun!

Table of Contents

Title Page

Declarations and Statements	ii
Abstract	iii
Summary	iv
Acknowledgements	Vi
Contents	Vii
List of Tables and Figures	X
List of Abbreviations	X

Part A: Literature Review

1. Literature Review	1
1.1 Introduction and Overview of Literature Review	1
1.2 Key Sources	1
2. Transition	3
2.1 Conceptualisation of Transition	3
2.2 Psychological Models of Transition	4
2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework	5
2.2.2 Vgotsky's Socio-Cultural Framework	7
2.2.3 The Model of Personal Change	10
2.2.4 Summary of Theoretical Frameworks of Transition	17
2.3 The Transition Process	18
2.3.1 Change Processes	19
2.4 Implications of Transition	22
2.4.1 Evidence for Positive Outcomes at Transition	23
2.4.2 Evidence for Negative Outcomes at Transition	25
2.4.2.1 The 'Dip' in Attainment	27
2.4.2.2 Socio-emotional difficulties associated with Transition	28
2.5 Protective and Risk Factors associated with Transition	30

2.5.1 Protective Factors associated with transition	31
2.5.1.1 Relationships	31
2.5.1.2 Resilience	32
2.5.1.3 Belonging	33
2.5.2 Risk Factors associated with transition	33
2.5.3 Vulnerable Pupils	36
2.6 Pupil Voice in Transition	37
2.7 Role of Parents in Transition	40
3. Anxiety	43
3.1 Anxiety related to Transition	43
3.1.1 Existing measures of Transition Concerns and Anxiety	43
3.2 Parent and Child Anxiety	45
3.2.1 Modelling of Anxious Behaviours	46
3.2.2 Threat Bias	47
4. Conclusions Leading to Current Research	48
4.1 Relevance to EP profession	49
4.2 The Present Study and Research Questions	49
References	51

Part B: Research Article

Abstract	63
Introduction	64
Rationale for research	65
Research Questions	65
The Current Study	66
Ontology and Epistemology	66
Ethical considerations	67
Methodology	67
Participants	67
Procedure and Measures	70

Analysis and Results	72
Quantitative analysis	72
Quantitative results	74
Qualitative analysis	76
Qualitative results	76
Discussion	93
Limitations and Implications for Further Research	98
Implications for EP Practice	98
References	100

Part C: Reflective Summary

Contribution to Knowledge	137
Critical Account by the Research Practitioner	149
References	154

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Documents	103
Appendix B: Interview Schedules	108
Appendix C: School Concerns Questionnaire	110
Appendix D: Example Annotated Transcript with Themes	115
Appendix E: Interview Transcripts	Attached disc
Appendix F: Raw data from SCQ and SPSS output	Attached disc

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Research outlining potential negative outcomes of transition

Table 2: Questionnaire measures of school-related concerns

Table 3: Participant numbers by gender for stage 1

Table 4: Vulnerability factors identified by pupil primary school

Table 5: Participant numbers by gender for stage 2

Table 6: Highest child and parent concerns

Figure 1: Final Thematic Map

List of Abbreviations

UK	United Kingdom
EP	Educational Psychology
LA	Local Authority
SEN	Special Educational Needs
LAC	Looked After Children
SES	Socio-Economic Status
STAI	State-Trait Anxiety Inventory
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
SCARED	Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders

Literature Review

1. Introduction and Overview

The literature review seeks to focus on existing research and psychological theory pertaining to the primary to secondary school transition. The review will be structured into three parts.

The first part reviews the literature relating to transition, including the perceived opportunities and challenges linked to transition. The second section will focus on the implications of transition for pupils' who can be defined as 'vulnerable', and explores proposed risk and resilience factors for transition. The third section will explore anxiety and transition, including the possible role of parental anxiety and how it may affect children's construct of the transition process.

The review concludes with a summary and a set of research questions which will be explored by the following study.

1.2. Key Sources

The sources used in the following literature review were gathered from academic databases. The primary databases utilised were PsychInfo and ERIC. Additional peer reviewed journal articles were sourced using Google Scholar, alongside Government policies and book chapters. Relevant books in print were also reviewed. A 'snowball' method (Creswell, 2003) was implemented to explore relevant literature references.

The first section of the literature review employed the key search terms 'transition', 'primary to secondary transition', and 'school transition'. These phrases were also

combined with other key words, such as 'school', 'education', 'adolescents', 'parents', 'constructs', 'anxiety', 'vulnerable' and 'educational psychology'. The second section of the literature review required additional database searches involving the key terms 'anxiety', 'parent and child', and 'parent and child dyad'.

Inclusion criteria required that the articles were published in a peer reviewed journal and were written (or translated) in English. Literature was also deemed appropriate if the abstract included the word 'transition' or the terms 'child anxiety' and 'parent anxiety'. Unpublished work such as dissertations, theses and presentations were not considered, in addition to non-peer reviewed articles. The resulting articles were filtered based on their relevance to the current literature review. The database searches were conducted between September 2013 and January 2015, however further searches were also carried out until the point of final submission in April 2015.

Although there was a primary focus to include literature which was related to the primary to secondary school transition in the United Kingdom, some articles considered were published by journals outside of the UK. These are included to support the assertion that school transition is an area of global relevance, not only for the UK education system. Although key theories and findings are drawn from research conducted outside of the UK, it is acknowledged that the education system in other countries may differ. However all research papers cited have the commonality of discussing a transition in education at the time of adolescence. It should be noted that many of the studies comprising this literature review were conducted in Western Countries, and consequently cultural differences relating to school transition may not be fully reflected.

Transition

Conceptualisation of transition

In the UK, the majority of pupils move from primary to secondary school when they are 11 years of age (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Choi, 2012). These pupils join secondary school as a new cohort in the September following year six. This move from primary to secondary education is frequently referred to as 'primary to secondary transition' or 'transition to secondary school'. Within the literature, the term 'transfer' is also used to describe the move from primary to secondary school. These two terms, 'transition' and 'transfer', have been used interchangeably within the literature to refer to both the pupil's move between settings (such as primary to secondary school move) and within settings (such as the move between academic years in a single educational provision).

Galton et al. (1999) conceptualise the word 'transfer' as a descriptive term to describe a pupil's move from one educational provision to another. An example of this would be the move from primary to secondary school. In comparison, the term 'transition' has been used by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) to refer to the process involved for a pupil to join and adjust to a new educational setting. Although there does not appear to be a universally accepted conceptualisation of the terminology used to describe the process of moving from primary to secondary school, this literature review will adopt the term 'transition'. The majority of literature relating to the primary to secondary move which has been conducted in the UK uses the term 'transition', in comparison to international research which tends to use the word 'transfer'. It may be argued that the term transfer is too discrete in its meaning,

as it suggests that the move from primary to secondary school is a simplistic one stage action of moving from one place of education to another. Given the existing research base which recognises the primary to secondary move as an important change in the majority of young people's lives (Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012) it may be too limiting to use the term 'transfer'. West, Sweeting and Young (2010, p.45) add further support to this by describing the move from primary to secondary as a "multi-dimensional process", which cannot be defined as a distinct episode. The move from primary to secondary can be considered as a continuing process, in which pupils' experience significant changes. For this reason, the term 'transition' will be used for the remainder of the literature review and subsequent research report to acknowledge the *process* of changing from one state to another.

Psychological models of transition

Transition is acknowledged as a complex process, where pupils are required to successfully navigate multiple emotional, social, organisational, cognitive and systemic changes (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber, 2000; Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012). It is therefore important to consider theoretical frameworks underpinning the transition process. A number of frameworks are drawn upon in the existing transition literature; predominantly Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Framework and Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-Cultural Framework are cited to provide a theoretical framework for the process of transition. In addition to these two theories there is also an acknowledgement of the relevance of change theories on the transition process, such as the Model of Personal Change (Fisher, 2012). These proposed frameworks will be discussed further in relation to transition.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework (1979; 1993; 2005) has been referenced in several articles pertaining to school transition (Tobell, 2003; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Brewin and Statham, 2011; Walters, Lester, Wenden and Cross, 2012).

Bronfenbrenner's approach acknowledges the multifaceted dynamic interactions between an individual and the systems which form their environment.

Bronfenbrenner proposes that the context in which a child develops is comprised of five primary nested systems:

- Micro-system (comprising of direct interactions between family, peer group or school staff);
- Meso-system (the connections between the elements of the micro system);
- Exo-system (the social settings which affect the child indirectly, such as the community or parental workplace);
- Macro-system (the broader influencing factors such as laws, cultural values or political landscape);
- And Chrono-system (the historical context within which an interaction occurs and the way in which changes occur over time).

- (adapted from Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006).

The Ecological approach acknowledges that there may be multiple influences which may affect the child at any one point in time, through interactions between the individual child and their intricate environment. Consequently, a child's navigation through the transition process may be viewed as a systemic issue, with the child's environment significantly influencing effective transition. In accordance with

Bronfenbrenner's framework, the emphasis on supporting pupils' transition moves away from purely considering within-child factors, and instead looks to consider how systemic changes within the child's environment can be utilised (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006).

Using Bronfenbrenner's model, transition can be seen through a lens which recognises the series of relationships between people and the physical and social environment. Although referring to the transition to start primary school, Astbury (2009) argues that an ecological approach to transition "highlights the significance of relationships and the way interactions between children, families, educators and the community shape the experience of transition in important ways" (p.4). The underlying principles of recognising an individual within the context of their relationships and connections is not just limited to the experience of starting school for the first time. Perry, Dockett, Whitton, Vickers, Johnston & Sidoti, (2006) argue that this acknowledgement is essential for the future success in moving throughout and between different educational contexts during a child's educational journey. The implications for accepting Bronfenbrenner's model would be that children, families and schools are active collaborators in the transition process, including planning, implementing and reviewing of transition policies and practices, as opposed to being passive recipients of transition. Astbury (2009) argues that this collaborative ecological approach provides specific outcomes for children, families and school systems which results in improved relationships between people and learning environments.

Vgotsky's Socio-Cultural framework

In a similar vein to Bronfenbrenner, Vgotsky's (1978) socio-cultural framework acknowledges the interaction between an individual and their social context.

However, the socio-cultural framework places high prominence on the importance of social interaction for learning and development. The socio-cultural framework has been considered within the literature as having valid application to transition (Tobbell, 2003; Richards, 2011; and Crafter and Maunder, 2012), especially when considering transition within the context of the broader social and cultural context.

The socio-cultural framework postulates that individuals actively construct meanings which are founded on their experiences, especially social interactions. These constructed meanings then form expectations for navigating new or novel situations. As part of their development children reconstruct knowledge from the previous generations of communities whom they belong to. Crafter and Maunder (2012) argue that the change brought about by transition, an act which is influenced by an external social situation, can best be understood by considering social and cultural influences. They support the earlier assertion that transition should not be considered as simply a move in physical location or a progression in developmental age, but rather a "multifaceted process which invariably involves changes to self-identity born out of the uncertainty in the social and cultural worlds of the individual" (p.3). Crafter and Maunder (2012) suggest that the transition to secondary school involves new social interactions which involve a "reorientation of identity based on how the self is reflected through interactions with others" (p.10). They claim that transition is an example of *rupture* (Zittoun, 2006), where the individual is involved in a situation or

period of change which can “engender uncertainty or disquiet” (Crafter and Maunder, 2012, p.10). It is certainly acknowledged in the existing literature that the transition to secondary school involves a change to pupil’s cultural context, their historical experiences, and their relationships with others (Gorgorio, Planas and Vilella, 2002, p.24).

Beach (1999) furthered this idea by suggesting that transitions not only have the potential to be a challenging process, but also to be a catalyst to alter a person’s self-identity. Beach (1999) argued that transition is not a simple matter of transferring knowledge, but instead is about reconstructing identity and how we interact with others. In this sense, transition can be regarded as consequential in personal development. Research relating to transition into higher education has supported this hypothesis, suggesting that students navigating the changes and challenges whilst adjusting to the transition to University study, leads to personal transformation and a new sense of identity (Hussey and Smith, 2010; Maunder, Gingham and Rogers, 2010). In terms of the primary to secondary transition, literature has discussed the notion of evolving identity through transition. Lucey and Reay (2000) suggest that, during the process of transition, children negotiate their sense of self and hold an ‘anxious readiness’ about maturing in a new educational setting. In fact, the development of self-identity has been acknowledged as a ‘successful marker’ for a positive transition from primary to secondary school (Evangelou et al, 2008).

In addition to the assumption that transition acts as a facilitator for the development of self-identity, the socio-cultural model offers a framework to consider how social and cognitive resources play a role in an individual’s transition.

Whereas the above examples of socio-cultural theories of transition place emphasis on the role of identity change within the individual, there is little acknowledgment of how the individual influences the systems within which they are placed. Within the socio-cultural framework, Wenger (2000) suggests that transition can be observed as a process of joining and becoming a new member of a community. The Community of Practice framework (Wenger 2000) suggests that transition is a two way process, where both the individual and the community acquire new skills, meanings and identities.

Although the ecological and socio-cultural approach are considered to be two separate frameworks, there are parallel underlying principles which result in the two approaches complementing one another significantly (Wertsch, 2005). Both frameworks acknowledge the importance of the wider social, cultural and historical experiences on how individuals develop and construct meaning in new situations. When applied to transition, both the ecological model and the socio-cultural model draw attention to the importance of the complex context from which individuals develop, and the significant influence of relationships and social interactions.

Although these frameworks may be beneficial in ensuring that a holistic approach to transition is considered, there are other theoretical frameworks which can be applied to transition in order to offer alternative, yet complementary, perspectives. Given the existing literature, which suggests transition can be a period of anxiety for most children (Galton and Morrison, 2000; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2006; and Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008), it was felt that frameworks and models which can be applied to transition to account for the psychology of change, and consequently anxiety, were valuable to explore. These alternative frameworks will be discussed in further detail.

The Model of Personal Change

Through Personal Construct Theory, Fisher (2003) proposed the 'Model of Personal Change' to describe the process of personal change and transition. The model was revised in 2012, and referred to as 'Fisher's Personal Transition Curve'. The Transition Curve seeks to identify the different emotional states that people encounter when negotiating a transition process, suggesting ten possible emotional states. The model seeks to provide a framework for the impact that change has on individuals' personal construct systems and the subsequent implications for their self-perception.

Although Fisher's model is not explicitly linked to school transition, the constructs in his model lend themselves well to the experience of pupil transition, especially when considering the role that transition has in the evolution of a pupil's constructs and self-identity. Fisher (2012) argues that any change, no matter the size, has the potential to impact on a person by generating conflict between their existing values and beliefs and anticipated altered ones. The ten stages, and their pertinence to school transition are outlined below:

1. Anxiety: Fisher suggests that transitions which are instigated by events perceived to be out of an individuals' control and understanding can result in feelings of anxiety. Without a clear understanding of how a new system will operate, people may find it difficult to anticipate their future and to pre-emptively understand the ways in which they should operate in a new system, or understand how the system will interact with them. Fisher draws parallels with McCoy's (1977) term of 'bewilderment', where a person is aware of an imminent and comprehensive change in their lives, however they do not have

the information to predict how they will navigate the change. In terms of school transition, pupils may have anxiety during their time in year 6, where they know that the move to secondary school is imminent and inevitable, however their destination secondary school or tutor group may not have been divulged, and may be perceived to be out of their control.

2. Happiness: Fisher proposes that once an individual recognises that their viewpoint is acknowledged and shared by others, then they may consider transition to be a time for positive change. Individuals may reflect on their past or current situation and, despite whether the past is constructed as positively or negatively, will have an anticipation and possibly excitement of potential improvement. There is evidence of this construct within existing literature. Although there is a propensity within the body of research to focus on anxieties and fears relating to transition, there is also evidence that pupils' have an element of 'excited anticipation' (Lucey and Reay, 2000). Ashton (2008) further supports this by suggesting that many pupils hold excitement about the various new aspects of secondary education, and are eager to learn as much about the school system as possible prior to transition.
3. Fear: Fisher suggests that fear presents itself when the individual recognises that the transition process may call for changes in their own behaviour and self-perceptions. This change will alter how both the individual sees themselves, and how others perceive them. At this stage, pupils may be questioning the transition process and wondering "how is this going to affect me?" As previously discussed, in relation to socio-cultural theory, there is an acknowledgement that transition can have a significant effect on how pupil's

perceive themselves, as they navigate and adapt to their new school environment. Lucey and Reay (2000) propose that fear and anxiety relating to transition can serve as a positive function as part of a developmental process where children construct their ideas of 'self'. Although Lucey and Reay (2000) argue that this fear is a "necessary and integral force in transitional states" (p.191), there is also an acknowledgement in the literature that pupil's perceived change in self-concept can often be negative (Harter et al., 1992). Fisher (2012) cites Frances (1999) in suggesting that the emotions of fear and threat are two key stages which can cause an individual to resist change.

4. Threat: Fisher proposes that an individual's awareness of an imminent, comprehensive change to their core constructs results in a major change on what they perceive to be their core identity. During transition, pupils may be unsure of how to act in their new environment, where 'old rules' are no longer valid and 'new rules' are yet to be determined. At this stage, pupils comprehend the significant change that transition may have upon them.
5. Guilt: Given that the transition process is forcing pupil's to redefine their self-identity, Fisher argues that the individual will attempt to explore events from the past and attempt to provide alternative interpretations as a way of redefining themselves. During this reflective period, there may be a recognition that previous actions are no longer harmonious with the individual's core beliefs. Subsequently, there are feelings of guilt, as the individual recognises the inappropriateness of previous actions and the impact on others. At this point, it is suggested that the individual may start to feel disillusionment and start to withdraw from the transition process, especially if

they feel that their values, beliefs and goals are incompatible with those of the new organisation. Anderson et al (2000) lend support to this hypothesis when discussing difficult transitions and the process of disengagement from education. They suggest that, unless a student identifies with the school to some extent and feels that they belong to the school, the pupil is more likely to feel marginalised by their new environment and the likelihood of gradual disengagement is increased. Although Fisher's model presents this stage in a negative way, there is also acknowledgement in the literature that pupils may perceive the secondary transition as an opportunity for a 'fresh start' (Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012). Despite pupil's feeling that their previous actions are dislodged from their self-identity, they may perceive their impending move to secondary school as being an opportunity for a clean slate, where their new identity can be established, without a conflicting history.

6. Depression: Fisher proposes that this stage is characterised by a general lack of motivation and a sense of confusion. Pupils' may be unsure as to what their future holds in their new secondary school, and how they will 'fit in'. Questioning "who am I, and how do I fit in to an unfamiliar system?" can undermine the person's core sense of self and leave them feeling quite lost.
7. Hostility: This stage is characterised when previous ways of operating in a system are utilised, with no success in the new environment. This can be problematic if an individual continues to behave in the same way that they did in their old system, even when they fail to achieve successful outcomes in the new system. The primary school system is markedly different to the secondary

school system, with transition hailing both organisational and social discontinuities (Anderson et al., 2000). Simmonds and Blyth (1987) argue that the primary environment is reflective of an organisational family, whereas the secondary environment is typified as a more bureaucratic environment, with a greater emphasis on departmentalisation, pupil ability and rules. Although Simmonds and Blyth (1987) is a relatively old reference more modern literature reflects this perception in differences between the primary and secondary system, with research highlighting pupil concerns about the organisational and social discontinuities between primary and secondary school (Rice, 1997; Anderson et al., 2000; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2007; West, Sweetling and Young., 2008). Therefore, given the systemic changes, it may be of little surprise that pupils might find it difficult to navigate new processes within the secondary system, possibly resulting in failed outcomes. Examples of this within the literature are evident, such as the 'drop in attainment' within the early stages of secondary education (Roderick, 1993; West et al., 2008) and the increased instance of pupil's experiencing unsuccessful transitions if they have presented with behavioural difficulties in primary school (Anderson et al, 2000). It may be hypothesised that pupils are continuing to operate in ways which do not fit in with the new system. Fisher (2012) argues that if an individual is experiencing hostility, they may continue to use processes which bear no success, and could possibly ignore (or even undermine) new processes expected by the system.

8. Denial: In a similar way to hostility, denial is characterised by a continuation of using old constructs from their previous system, however this is due to a lack of

acceptance of change and a denial of implications that the transition may have on the individual. Instead of actively resisting adapting behaviour to fit in with the expectation of the new system (as is the case with hostility), denial can be viewed as the individual 'sticking their head in the sand' and acting as though change has not occurred. If the transition is seen as being too challenging to a person's sense of self they may continue to use old practices and ignore evidence which conflicts with their existing construct as a way to eliminate the problem from their awareness.

9. Gradual acceptance: In the latter stages of a transition process, Fisher (2012) argues that individuals start to make sense of their new environment, and their role within it. Given a period of time in the new system, people are able to receive feedback about their constructs and actions, and can see a positive future. Fisher (2012) suggests that, at this stage, the individual is starting to perceive control over the change and have a deeper understanding of the functions of transition, modifying their constructs to fit in with the new environment. This is linked in with an increase in self-confidence. In terms of school transition, there is evidence that the period of worry and difficulty in negotiating transition is short lived, declining during the first term of secondary education (Stradling and McNeil, 2000; Rice, Fredrickson and Seymour, 2011). The majority of pupils will start to make sense of the systemic changes that transition brings, and will adopt new processes which are cohesive with their new environment. However it must be noted that the stage of gradual acceptance is not necessarily a certainty for all pupils. Although the majority of pupils navigate transition with success, there is evidence that some pupils are

unable to adjust to the new challenges of secondary school. It may be argued that these children hold impermeable constructs which restrict them from adaptation. Rice et al (2011) propose that this lack of a successful transition process can set in motion a chain of events that can have major implications for future adjustments and academic outcomes. They build upon this further to express that this group of pupils are at a higher risk of becoming demotivated and disengaged from education. In addition to this concern, unsuccessful transitions have been shown to have a long term deleterious effect on pupil's self-esteem and academic attainment (West et al., 2008).

10. Moving forwards: The final stage of the Personal Transition Curve proposes that the individual is starting to exercise more control, that both their permeable and impermeable constructs have adapted, enabling them to interact with their environment in a positive way. Following the previous stages of rebuilding identity, the individual is now at a stage where they have a more cohesive sense of self within the new system, and consequently are able to act in line with their constructs whilst also interacting harmoniously with the new environment. Their constructs have adapted and now match with the perceived realities in the new environment. This notion of assimilating with the new system is echoed in Evangelou et al's (2008) analysis of the factors which promote a successful transition. They suggest that a child's understanding and ability to settle into new school routines is a key element of successful transition. In Evangelou et al's (2008) research, children identified the secondary school as playing a pivotal role in supporting them to adapt to the new environment by "helping them to get to know their way around the

school, by relaxing rules and implementing procedures to help new [them] adapt” (p. 32).

Although the Personal Transition Curve is a general framework for change processes, there is merit for applying the principles to school transition. However it does not fully comprehend the additional factors which may influence an individual’s transition journey, such as support mechanisms or individual protective and risk factors and traits. The model suggests that people experience the stages in a linear fashion, however there has been no research to date that formally investigates this, and it may be argued that adopting a linear approach does not encapsulate the complexity of the primary to secondary transition process. Despite these limitations, it could be argued that the model is useful in conceptualising the impact that transition can have on young people, in terms of personal construct psychology.

Summary of theoretical frameworks of transition

Although there are several models and theoretical frameworks which can be applied to the transition process, it is acknowledged that there is no singular model which accounts for the complex, multi-faceted change process which occurs during transition. In fact, Tobbell (2014) asserts that, although much research has been conducted in the field of transition, it still remains an under-theorised area. Tobbell (2014) suggests that it may be necessary to draw upon multiple approaches in order to better comprehend the complexities of transition. Subsequently, the present study has considered the above frameworks within its approach, acknowledging the complexity within which people develop and the significant role of relationships and social interactions on learning processes.

The Transition Process

The transition from primary to secondary school has been identified as as a significant life event and pivotal moment in a child's educational career (West et al., 2010; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012). Bailey and Barnes (2012) have defined transition as an "important life event" (p.48), which is characterised by numerous changes, adjustments and consequent stresses. These changes and adjustments can be considered as "institutional discontinuities" (Rice, 1997) at the organisational and social level. Changes such as school size, departmentalisation, academic standards (especially increased rigour in assessment), teacher expectations and pupil autonomy have all been identified as organisational discontinuities by Anderson et al. (2000). Further to this, they provide examples of social discontinuity relating to transition as including changes to the diversity of the student population, relationships with teaching staff, and sense of belonging. There is significant research supporting the assertion that transition has an impact on pupils, whether it be negative, positive, short or long term. Consequently transition is considered to be a significant process which merits noteworthy consideration by researchers and educational professionals (Anderson et al., 2000; Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Hope, Husband and Lindsay, 2003; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; and West et al, 2010).

The following section will consider why transition is deemed to be a pivotal moment for young people, and will discuss the implications of transition which have been presented in the literature. The section will briefly present the risk and protective factors associated with successful transition, and will conclude by reflecting on those pupils who are constructed within the literature base as 'vulnerable' during transition.

Change processes

As previously acknowledged, the transition process is characterised by simultaneous changes which have been described in the literature as resulting in “rupture” (Zittoun, 2006) or “deep discontinuity” (Howe, 2011, p.1). An earlier study by Galton and Wilcocks (1983) found a discernible decline in achievement, motivation and enjoyment of school during the primary to secondary transition. They suggested that the disparity between the child centred primary school and the subject centred secondary school was a predominant explanatory factor. Despite this research being conducted over thirty years ago, there is still significant evidence in recent literature to suggest that the differences in primary and secondary provisions may account for some of the difficulties experienced during transition.

Roderick (2003) stated that as children move from primary to secondary school they are confronted with significant changes, such as:

- Increased school size (both in terms of the physical size of the school site and the number of students and staff within the organisation);
- Increased heterogeneity of the pupil population;
- Perception of a decrease in the number of personal relationships with teaching staff;
- An increased work load and pressure to succeed;
- Greater prominence on relative ability and competition (as opposed to the focus on effort and improvement, which is experienced in a primary setting);
- And a greater emphasis on the ‘rules of behaviour’ with a higher expectation for compliance and less tolerance for misbehaviour.

In addition to these top-down changes, pupils are also required to navigate new social structures and develop new relationships with peers and staff. Several authors have recognised that pupils need to traverse multiple academic, organisational and social changes whilst coping with the alteration of their self-identity within the education system (Sirch, 2003; West et al., 2010; and Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012). Howe (2011) has attempted to conceptualise the changes during transition by proposing an adaptation of Bore and Fuller's (2007) model, suggesting that transition involves 'five bridges' which pupils are required to cross: administrative; social and personal; pedagogy and curriculum; managing learning and autonomy.

These organisational changes serve to highlight the contrast between primary and secondary educational settings. Anderson et al (2000) and Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) assert that, in the majority of instances in the UK, primary schools are typically smaller organisations where pupils are mainly educated in one class per academic year with one teacher and one set of classmates. It is argued that this smaller environment fosters a greater sense of safety, familiarity and belonging. Pointon (2000) builds upon this further by suggesting that the sudden difference in space, size and a pupil's own position in a learning environment can affect their identities as learners. Pointon (2000) postulates that pupils perceive a lack of control within the secondary school environment, which impacts upon their attitude to school and learning. In support of this Reynolds (1992) found that pupils who were given a shared responsibility and control over their environment were more likely to be motivated and engaged during education.

In addition to the physical changes in the layout of secondary school, authors Galton, Gray and Ruddock (2003) have documented learning and curriculum discontinuities between primary and secondary schools, including a shift towards academic rather than social concern. At transition, both the curriculum and the pedagogy may alter. Jindall-Snape and Foggie (2008) observe that primary schools tend to focus their teaching on the individual pupils, whereas secondary schools tend to be more subject focussed. Topping (2011, p.275) elaborates on this further by suggesting that transition can be characterised by a “shift from child-centre, activity-based or experiential learning classrooms to a more didactic approach, informed by a different pedagogical ideology”.

This change in focus from child-centred learning to attainment based learning has been reflected in research exploring relationships between pupil optimism and attainment in primary and secondary. Koizumi (1999) found a reciprocal relationship between optimism and attainment in the primary years, however following transition attainment became the more dominant influence. Although this correlation does not necessarily imply causation, it is still interesting to note the shift in pupil’s self-perceptions during transition. The results may coincide with pupil developmental changes, which bring about a more realistic self-perception or, as Topping (2011) argues, it may mean that pupils are becoming increasingly overwhelmed by external perceptions of their worth based on examination results. Although Koizumi (1999) highlights some interesting findings, it must be noted that the research was conducted on a population of pupils in Japanese education, and therefore the study would need to be replicated in the British Educational System in order to account for any cultural differences.

In addition to the contextual changes, transition to secondary school also coincides with adolescent development and puberty. Historically, much of the literature relating to transition had operated within a framework which enclosed transition difficulties as a consequence of the developmental changes which young people are going through (Anderson et al, 2000). Although the concurrence of developmental and systemic transitions adds another dimension to the already complex process of secondary school transition, researchers now acknowledge that developmental changes are not the sole factor for a pupil's ability to negotiate transition. Instead research now gives merit to the impact of contextual factors on pupil's transition experiences, alongside developmental maturation (Schumaker, 1998; Anderson et al, 2000).

Given the multiple systemic and developmental changes during transition, it may not be surprising that transition is considered as a period of stress. Stringer and Dunsmuir (2012) suggest that transition is a process of adapting to change, which is "a key task in the process of learning and development" (p.6). They assert that educational transitions can provide opportunities to experience a positive adaptation to change but also recognise that successful transitions cannot simply be assumed.

Implications of transition

Several authors have presented transition as a process which has both negative and positive implications for young people. Although the majority of literature focuses on the challenges of transition, it is also acknowledged as a positive opportunity for growing independence, expanding horizons, changes in academic and social expectations and adaptations to new social structures.

Evidence for positive outcomes at transition

Rice, Frederickson and Seymour (2011) claim that, despite transition being identified as a stressful process, it can also be a catalyst for positive outcomes. In spite of the copious amount of evidence to suggest that transition is an anxiety provoking process for the majority of young people, there is also accompanying feelings of optimism and anticipation for the new opportunities which may arise (Topping, 2011). Zeedyk et al (2003) conceptualised this combination of feelings as 'anxious readiness'. Instead of perceiving transition purely as a threat, there is evidence that many pupils also construct transition as a positive challenge. Sirsch (2003) found that pupils perceive the transition to secondary school as an opportunity to have more choices and make new friends, however at the same time they also held concerns about being bullied by older pupils, receiving harder work, dips in attainment, and navigating their way around a larger school site. These concerns have been reiterated by other researchers (Lucey and Reay, 2000; Rice et al., 2011) who have found that the impending transition often presents with conflicting constructs held by pupils. Graham and Hill (2003) found that pupils were anxious about the intrinsic change processes which were involved in transition, but were also positive about the new opportunities which accompanied the move. It may therefore be argued that pupils construct transition as an exciting opportunity, in the face of a challenging process of change. The transition can be reframed as having the potential to engender change through a number of processes, such as the construction of new knowledge, the adaptation or incorporation of existing skills and constructs into a new context, a change in identity and a change in social position (Crafter and Maunder, 2012).

As part of a longitudinal study focusing on the transition experiences of pupils in six Local Authorities in the UK, the Department of Education published a research report which suggested that transition can be considered as 'successful' if pupils are able to:

- Develop new friendships;
- Improve their self-esteem and confidence;
- Settle in so that they are not causing concern to parents;
- Show increased interest in school and school work;
- Adapt to new routines and organisational changes with ease;
- Experience curriculum continuity.

-Evangelou et al (2008, p.ii)

Evangelou et al (2008) propose that successful transitions can lead to the further enhancement of self-esteem, positive self-identity and development of emotionally healthy and resilient young people. This strengthens the need for pupils to be supported positively during the transition process.

Generally, the majority of children make successful secondary school transitions (Alston, Sammons and Mortimore, 1985; Galton, Gray & Rudduck, 1999; McGee, Ward, Gibbons & Harlow, 2004). Despite the presence of transition anxiety, the majority of pupils experience minimal negative consequences of transition, and their anxieties are considerably reduced within the first term of secondary school (Galton et al., 1999; Galton and Morrison, 2000; Strading and McNeil, 2000; and Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012). Although there is an assertion that most pupils make successful transitions, it is important to note that researchers have not used a universal definition of what constitutes a 'successful transition' and therefore there may be variations in the

conceptualisation and consequently the number of pupils reported to have experienced a successful transition.

Despite the lack of a universal definition within the literature, it is widely accepted that most pupils adapt to the environmental, organisational, cognitive, social and emotional changes during transition with minimal negative outcomes. However, research has documented several negative outcomes related to transition for both the general transition population and specific groups of children.

Evidence for negative outcomes at transition

Despite evidence that the majority of children navigate transition successfully (Brown, Kendell, Teeman and Ridley, 2004), there is also indication of negative effects, such as a distinct reduction in children's happiness and wellbeing during the transition period (Marks, 2004). There is also evidence that, for a significant minority, transition can be a difficult time where self-confidence as a learner is reduced and disengagement from formal education begins (Sutherland, Yee and McNess, 2010). The body of literature relating to transition often employs negative language to describe the transition process. Transition has been described as 'a stressful event' (Deihl, Vicary and Deike, 1997), 'confusing and challenging' (Ward, 2001), 'difficult and problematic' (Anderson et al., 2000), 'complicated and difficult to understand' (Rudduck, 1996), 'traumatic' (Hawk and Hill, 2001) and 'personally disastrous' (Mizelle and Irwin, 2000). This use of negative language is highly indicative of the focus for literature to consider the negative implications of transition.

The UK Government has accepted that "too many children still find the transition from primary to secondary school difficult "(DfES, 2004, p.61). With the acknowledgement

that transition is still a problematic area within the UK education system (Noyes, 2006), there has been a national focus on supporting pupils through the process. An unsuccessful transition can not only have implications for the child and their immediate micro and mesosystem, but can also have wider implications for the exosystem and macrosystem. There are significant documented financial and social consequences for pupils who experience adverse educational outcomes such as high rates of illiteracy, unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse. The DfES have stressed the importance of addressing pupils' needs during transition as a preventative measure to reduce negative educational and societal outcomes.

The extent to which pupils adjust during the transition is argued to have a direct impact on their ongoing development during adolescence (Eccles et al., 1997). The transition process can significantly influence pupils' psychological, emotional, social and cognitive development (Rudolph et al., 2001; Sirsch, 2003; Lohaus, Elben, Ball and Klein-Hesslig, 2004; Noyes, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; Gillison, Standage and Skerington, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; and West et al., 2010). The literature documents several potential consequences of unsuccessful transitions such as reduced motivation, poor self-concept, poor social adjustment and disaffection (Fenzel, 2000; Watt, 2000; Burgess, Johnston, Key, Propper and Wilson, 2008; and Jordan, McRorie and Ewing, 2010).

West et al. (2010) and Bloyce and Fredrickson (2012) suggest that the research into transition can be broadly categorised into three domains; the effects of transition on educational attainment and well-being; pupils' experiences of transition, and predictors of difficult transitions. Further synthesis of research pertaining to transition

suggests that there are two prevalent negative implications linked to transition; socio-emotional difficulties and a 'dip' in academic attainment during year 7 and year 8. (Whitby et al., 2006; Topping et al., 2011). Both of these phenomena will be considered in more detail.

[The 'dip' in academic attainment.](#)

Within research there has been a well-documented finding that attainment levels decrease upon transition (West et al., 2008; Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000). The research suggests that this attainment dip is an international rather than a national phenomenon. Hirsch (1998) endorses that there is a similar issue in many European countries, describing the school transition as "similarly seen as a weak link in the educational system" (p.70). However, there is recognition that pupil attainment tracking systems in the UK may be more rigorous than many of the other countries surveyed (Whitby et al., 2006).

West et al. (2008) emphasise the importance of the international research data; not only because it shows that a decline in academic attainment post-transition is a phenomenon found in different education systems, but also because this decline occurs at different ages in different education systems. McGee et al. (2003) and West et al. (2008) reason that the differing ages at which academic decline following transition is documented means that hypotheses of pubertal onset and developmental change is less likely. It is important to concede though that, although highlighting the importance of transition, the body of research does not demonstrate a causal link between transition and a drop in attainment. Galton et al. (2003) also validly reason that attainment data for Year 7 pupils is not as robust as data obtained in the primary

phase because they consist of a series of different assessments adjusted to National Curriculum Levels. Previous research investigating attainment decrease has repeated the same test before and after transition, and has drawn conclusions from comparing the changes in raw scores (Galton et al., 2000; Suffolk 1997, 2002). Assumptions have been made about the equivalence of levels between Key Stage Two and Key Stage Three. For this reason Galton et al. (2003) caution that, although there is evidence of a lull in attainment progress, there may be some doubt concerning the extent of these dips.

Although presented separately, the decline in academic achievement post transition cannot be completely segregated from the emotional and social difficulties that pupils may be experiencing. Tobbell (2003) claims that worries regarding transition can take up pupils' cognitive capacity and therefore present a barrier to learning, a view that is supported by Ashton (2008). Falls in academic performance have been linked to decreased self-concept as a learner and perceived competencies for individual subject areas (Mullins and Irvin, 2000). In a review of transition, Demetriou, Goalen and Ruddock (2000) concluded that there was evidence of motivation levels diminishing after an initial period of adjustment. They reasoned that the loss of motivation was due to a loss of self-esteem in a more competitive learning environment. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) also suggest that some pupils experience anxiety or depression related to transition, that can result in reduced motivation.

[Socio-emotional difficulties linked to transition](#)

Several authors have suggested that transition impacts significantly upon pupils' psychological, social, emotional, and cognitive development (Rudolph et al., 2001;

Sirsch, 2003; Lohaus et al., 2004; Aikins et al., 2005; Noyes, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; Gillison et al., 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; West et al., 2010). Table 1 documents research outlying potential negative outcomes of transition.

Authors	Negative outcomes of transition
Rice et al. (2011)	Decrease in attendance
Anderson et al. (2000) Cullingford (1999)	Higher instances of negative behaviour- Anderson et al. (2000) reported that children who have behavioural difficulties in primary school are more at risk of being excluded within the first year of secondary school. In fact, Cullingford (1999) found that the most significant rise in exclusion rates occurs at the transition from primary to secondary.
Galton et al.(2003) Rice et al. (2011) Topping (2012)	Decrease in motivation and engagement
Sirsch (2003) Otis, Grouzet and Pelletier (2005)	Decrease in self-esteem
Anderson et al (2000) Rudolph et al. (2001) Sirsch (2003) Tobbell (2003) Aikins et al (2005) Bailey and Baines (2012).	Increase in anxiety and depression
Demetriou et al. (2000) Sirsch (2003) Osborn, McNess and Pollard (2006) Crafter and Maunder (2012)	Impact on pupil's identity and self-concept

Bernt and Mekos (1995).	Increase in disaffection and disengagement from education
-------------------------	---

Table 1: research outlying potential negative outcomes of transition.

A large scale study on the impact of transition was conducted by West, Sweeting and Young (2010), who found that pupils' adjustment following transition had a significant impact upon wellbeing and attainment at age 15 and older. These findings led West et al. to conclude that "transition matters in a more profound way than often assumed" (p.47).

Although it is accepted that an unsuccessful transition can have long term negative implications for pupils, there is also an acknowledgement that there are individual differences in transition related concerns and adjustments (Rice et al, 2010). Gillison, Standage and Skevington (2008) found that the impact of transition on the self-reported quality of life for year 7 pupils only had a temporary negative impact on adolescent well-being and that psychological adjustment usually happens by the end of the first academic year. Although there is evidence that most pupils adapt to their new learning environment with no long term psychological implications, there is still evidence that some 'vulnerable' pupils need additional support during transition.

Protective and risk factors associated with transition

Bailey and Baines (2012) suggest that there are a range of interplaying protective and risk factors associated with transition. They asserted that pupils are active agents of the transition process, rather than passive recipients of systemic change.

Consequently, the way in which the child perceives, interprets and interacts with the various risk and resilience factors influences how successful their transition is.

Protective factors associated with transition

Relationships

Positive relationships with both peers and adults have been accepted as a protective factor during transition, which can help establish and maintain resilience (Galton et al., 2003; Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Carter, Clark, Cushing and Kennedy, 2005; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Weller, 2007; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; Smith, 2011; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Crafter and Maunder, 2012; Sancho and Cline, 2012). It has been suggested that supportive relationships during transition can reduce the sense of isolation and anxiety that a young person may feel. (Hertzog, Morgan, Diamond and Walker, 1996; Carter et al., 2005). West et al (2008) found that year 6 pupils who had an older friend in their destination secondary school were more likely to adjust to the secondary environment and establish new peer relationships when it came to their transition. Peer friendships may offer a valuable source of social and academic support, during the many systemic changes of transition (Galton et al., 2003; Crafter and Maunder, 2012).

In addition to peer support, it is recognised that positive relationships with staff can act as a protective factor during transition, especially for those pupils who are considered vulnerable (Tobbell, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009).

Considering the socio-cultural and ecological approach to transition, positive relationships may be considered vital during transition. Social relationships with staff, peers and older pupils can “provide social knowledge about ways of behaving or ways

of being” (Crafter and Maunder, 2012. P.16) in a situation which can otherwise present as being very confusing.

The importance of key relationships has been recognised in many of the existing intervention strategies for transition. There has been an increasing move towards establishing support mechanisms such as peer mentoring or nurture groups to help support pupils on transition.

Resilience

Jindall-Snape and Miller (2008) and Akos (2004) propose that successfully adapting to the changes of transition may be mediated by an individual’s level of resilience and protective external support networks, such as family. Many young people perceive transition as a potential threat (Newman and Blackburn, 2002; Akos, 2004) and therefore literature has sought to explore the impact of resilience on pupil’s transition experiences.

Resilience has been defined as the individual capacity for adaptation and to influence positive outcomes despite challenge or threat (Masten et al., 1990). Building upon the importance of positive relationships, Brewin and Statham (2011) advocate that establishing a positive relationship with school staff is particularly salient in terms of developing resilience, especially for Looked After Children. Aikins et al. (2005) suggest that enhancing resilience alongside self-esteem enables pupils to have a more positive view of themselves and transition, which leads to adaptive coping approaches and proactive adaptive behaviours. Supporting emotional wellbeing is therefore an imperative objective for transition support.

Belonging

Anderson et al (2000) argue that schools should endeavour to establish a sense of belonging for newly transitioned pupils. Aston (2008) stresses this point further by advocating that pupils cannot be expected to partake in “personal development and learning” (p.181) without a sense of belonging. School connectedness during early secondary school experiences are maintained to be key indicators for positive outcomes, such as continuation of education , reduced risk of mental health difficulties and substance abuse and increased academic achievement (Bond et al., 2007).

Authors have suggested that a sense of belonging can be fostered through the development of positive relationships with staff and peers, creating smaller ‘sub-communities’ within schools, and involving pupils in curricular and extra-curricular activities (Anderson et al., 2000). The identification-participation model (Finn, 1989) suggests that a sense of belonging can be developed through pupil identification (seeing themselves as a valid member of the community) and participation (being involved in school activities). However this research fails to attempt to provide an explanation about how this social and school connectedness can be achieved.

A sense of belonging is cited in many of the transition research papers as a facilitator for successful transition, and can therefore be argued as a potentially crucial feature of any transition programme aiming to facilitate a positive transition.

Risk factors associated with transition

Sirsch (2003) proposes that there are numerous factors which contribute to how effectively an individual deals with transition, including self-concept and anxiety. In

addition to this, there have been several demographic and personal characteristics which have been identified as predictors for more difficult transition experiences. Socio-demographic data provides evidence that the following factors can influence how successfully a pupil experiences transition:

- The age at time of transition;
- Gender;
- Socio-economic status (SES);
- Ethnicity;
- Pupils with additional learning needs and disabilities

The younger the age at the point of transition has been regularly identified as a predictor of poorer transition (West et al., 2008; Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000). There is also evidence that gender can play a role in how successful an individual's transition experience is, although there is debate about which gender finds transition more challenging. Although research from America suggests that girls are more vulnerable upon transition, especially when it comes to peer relationships (Anderson et al., 2000; West et al., 2008), there is conflicting evidence from studies based in New Zealand which conclude that boys are more at risk during transition (McGee et al., 2003). Anderson et al (2000) propose that girls find it more problematic to adjust to the changes in peer groups that might come with transition, which consequently has a bigger impact on their self-esteem in comparison to boys. However, it is also acknowledged that pupils who experience behavioural difficulties are more likely to struggle during systemic transitions. Given that boys are more likely to exhibit behavioural problems in primary school compared to girls (Gutman and Vorhous,

2012) it may be the case that both genders can be considered at risk, depending on the researcher's focus of the difficulties. Jordan et al (2010) suggest that a gender-specific phenomenon occurs during transition, where pupils adhere more closely to their gender stereotypes than they did previously in primary school. Jordan et al (2010) reasoned that pupils attempt to avoid additional cognitive load when faced with large systemic changes by preserving stereotypical roles, such as males being confrontational and territorial. Jordan et al. (2010) suggest that male behaviour during transition is more likely to have been construed as undesirable as boys are more adversely affected by stress, compared with female pupils, and therefore more likely to behave in ways which result in negative interactions with peers and staff. Although Jordan et al's. (2010) findings are worth considering, it should also be noted that data was collected when the pupil's had already been established in secondary school for half of the academic year, and consequently the researchers relied on pupil's retrospective self-reports. Given the research that suggests pupils generally adapt to their new learning environment towards the end of their first academic year, it may be argued that Jordan et al's. (2010) findings may not be fully reflective of how pupil's felt at the time of the early, and arguably more challenging, stages of transition.

Pupils with additional learning needs and disabilities have frequently been considered as vulnerable during transition (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012) particularly those with physical difficulties, learning difficulties, social and emotional difficulties and speech and language difficulties (Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

In their research, Evangelou et al (2008) found that pupils with SEN were more likely to be bullied in secondary school, compared to the population without SEN. In their sample 37 percent of children with SEN experienced bullying, in comparison to 25 percent of pupils without SEN. Although there are some negative associations between SEN and transition, Evangelou et al. (2008) found that pupils with SEN and disabilities experienced greater curriculum continuity between primary and secondary school. This may be partly due to the increased likelihood of this group of pupils' receiving enhanced transition packages which prepare them better for transition. Wood, Sylvester and Martin (2010) found that pupils who were meaningfully involved in their transition plan had higher levels of perceived competence. In comparison, those pupils who received generic undifferentiated systemic transition support were less likely to report high levels of competence during transition. Zeedyk et al (2003) argue that universal, undifferentiated transition processes often fail to take into account the needs of individual pupils that could impact on their transition success.

Vulnerable pupils

Although transition can present all pupils with an element of anxiety, Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) suggest that those who have special educational needs or are socially marginalised may experience a significantly more challenging transition process. In addition to pupils with SEN and the socio-demographic risk factors described, Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) propose that some pupils may be considered 'vulnerable' for a range of other reasons. West et al (2008) argue that, although the greater part of research seeking to distinguish between those pupils who make successful and

unsuccessful transitions originates from American research, there is certainly evidence that some pupils in the UK education system are more vulnerable than their peers.

Evidence suggests that vulnerable pupils are significantly more at risk of being adversely affected by transition, in contrast to their less vulnerable counterparts (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). It is reasoned that vulnerable pupils may have increased exposure to risk factors at the individual level, interacting with micro, meso and exo-systemic factors.

Pupil voice in Transition

The majority of research pertaining to transition has emphasised the concerns which pupils report during Year 6, in the lead up to transition. Rice et al. (2010) considered the descriptive studies pertaining to pupil concerns of transition and proposed that there were a range of concerns which pupils held (Anderson et al., 2000; Galton et al., 2000; Sirsch, 2003; Smith Akos, Lim and Wiley, 2008). These concerns were organised by Rice et al. (2010) to fit into three categories; organisational concerns, social concerns and academic concerns.

Organisational Concerns included:

- The new school environment;
- getting lost;
- The size of the secondary school;
- Changing classrooms;
- Travel to and from school;
- Remembering equipment;

- Number of teachers;
- Toilets;
- Following a timetable;
- New routines;
- And changing classes.

Social concerns included:

- Losing existing friends;
- Making new friends;
- Break time;
- Lunch time;
- Being bullied;
- Older children;
- Lots of people;
- And changes in social role.

Academic concerns included:

- Being able to do work;
- Increased academic demands;
- Homework;
- And PE.

In an exploratory factor analysis of the School Concerns Questionnaire (Thomasson, Field, O'Donnell and Woods, 2006), Rice et al. (2011) found that the most commonly endorsed concerns by pupils pre-transition were homework, being bullied,

remembering equipment, size of school and changing classes. Post transition, the most commonly endorsed concerns were being bullied, homework, older children, remembering equipment for school and being able to do the work. Rice et al (2011) suggest that the discrepancy between concerns pre and post transition is reflective of pupil's adapting to the organizational changes post transition. Comparatively, concerns such as bullying and homework were consistently high in both pre and post assessments. Although the SCQ is a self-reporting questionnaire, which may be criticised for potential validity problems, the results are consistent with previous research using alternatives methods for data collection. For example, being bullied was the highest reported concern in both pre and post samples, which is consistent with the findings of studies using focus groups and mixed methods (questionnaire and interview) designs (Lucey and Reay, 2000 and Smith et al. 2008, respectively).

It may be argued that the research conducted by Rice et al. (2011) is limited in terms of its longitudinal data, pre and post transition. The research consisted of a sample of 147 Year 6 pupils and 263 Year 7 Pupils. 57 pupils from the original primary sample completed the post-transition measures, accounting for only 39% of the original primary sample. Therefore, repeated measures was only available for a small number of pupils. Longitudinal data was only collected for those pupils who were attending two of the secondary schools within the Local Authority. Although Rice et al. (2011) ascertain that these two secondary schools were identified at the beginning of the study, there is no clarification or rationale of the inclusion of these schools in the study, or the exclusion of the remaining 16 secondary schools which the Year 6 participants went on attend.

The Role of Parents in Transition

Research to date has primarily focussed on the facilitators and barriers to a successful transition, predominately by exploring child perceptions of the transition process.

When considering the impact that lower Socio-Economic Status (SES) homes have on a pupil's transition, Rice et al (1997) hypothesised that pupils from lower SES homes often lack the parental support structures to help them make successful transitions. Rice et al (1997) elaborated on this further, suggesting that parents can impact on their child's transition through:

- The level of parental interest and participation in the schooling process (such as attending school events; checking homework) and the extent to which parents supplement their child's learning processes (such as attendance at cultural events)
- The degree to which parents speak to their children about school and the transition process.

Although Rice et al. (1997) suggest that the degree to which parents discuss school with their children is an influencing factor on a child's ability to have a successful transition, it must also be considered that the *content* of school based conversations between parent and child are also vitally important. Despite much of the literature reporting that some children had negative conceptualisations about transition based on "horror stories" communicated by their peers (Delamont, 1991. P.248), there has been little research attention paid to how parental constructs of school and transition can affect their child's conceptualisation of the transition process. Lucey and Reay (2000) argue that it is challenging to isolate children's anxieties from increasing

concern on the part of adults. Notwithstanding this assertion, there is still limited literature exploring the role of parents during the transition process.

Bronfenbrenner's interrelated and interconnected systems model provides a holistic framework to consider transition, but much of the research to date has focussed on the child or the school system. Little attention has been given to the role of the parents and how they may impact on their child's transition experience. Existing research predominantly uses a qualitative approach to investigating transition from the perspective of young people and school staff. There appears to be a void of research pertaining to the role of parents within the transition process. Although Evangelou et al (2008) sought the views of parents and children during their research, the predominate discussion from the results related to organisational or systemic issues related to transition (such as applying for places at secondary school) rather than exploring parental constructs of transition. It may also be argued that the data collection method utilised by Evangelou et al (2008) to collect parental views was too simple and narrowly focussed to fully capture parental views on the transition process. Evangelou et al (2008) gathered parental views using a postal questionnaire, sent out to parents post transition. The questionnaire predominantly focussed on how families chose, applied and prepared their child for secondary school, providing a narrow platform for parents to share their experiences of transition. As the questionnaires were sent out post transition, parents were asked to retrospectively consider elements of the transition process. It could be contended that retrospective self-reporting may result in recall bias, affecting the internal validity of the research.

The transition research involving parents that does exist suggests that parents and children are more likely to hold concerns about personal and social issues during transition, whereas schools are more likely to focus on administrative and organisational issues (Jindall-Snape and Miller, 2008). A review by Topping (2011) echoes this finding, stating that schools appear to be “somewhat pre-occupied with institutional initiatives”, whereas parents and children are more concerned with the “needs of the individual” (p. 279). Topping suggests that parents and schools need to meet somewhere in the middle by acknowledging one another’s concerns and moving towards taking action to help alleviate negative outcomes. For example, parents need to increase their concern and action about attainment, and teachers need to increase their concern and action about socio-emotional issues.

Anderson et al (2000) argue that parents should be involved, in order to facilitate successful systemic transitions. The existing literature gives the following rationale for parental involvement (Cooke, 1995; Anderson et al., 2000):

- Parents who are involved in the transition process tend to remain involved in their child’s schooling. This increased parental involvement has positive implications for pupil motivation, achievement and engagement;
- Parental involvement in the transition process develops communication between home and school.

Therefore there appears to be a justified rationale for conducting research which focuses on both children and parents’ constructs relating to transition, especially the concerns and anxieties that the transition process inevitably brings.

Anxiety related to Transition and Implications

Given the dominance of evidence suggesting transition is an anxiety provoking experience, the following section of the literature review provides a brief overview of anxiety and seeks to explore the role of parents in the development and maintenance of anxiety. Although it is recognised within the literature that anxiety is prominent in the child population pending transition, there has been no research to explore parental anxieties around transition. Given that both the ecological and socio-cultural model emphasise the importance of relationships and social interactions in the development of constructs, it is proposed that investigating parent child dyads in relation to transition is a valuable exercise. The following section of the literature review further discusses anxiety and sets out a rationale for the cogency of exploring parent anxiety in relation to child anxiety.

Existing measures of Transition Concerns and Anxiety

Rice et al (2011) conceded that most research into transition adopted a qualitative approach to describe pupil concerns. They argue that, although this is useful to understand the root of anxieties, a reliable quantitative measure would be valuable in understanding pupil's experiences of the primary to secondary transition. Rice et al. (2011) compiled a list of existing quantitative measures of transition concern (Table 2).

Study	Measure	Description of measure
Brown and Armstrong (1982)	Questionnaire designed for study	Current concerns recorded post transition with girls only, using checklist questionnaire developed using thematic analysis on essays about feelings during transition.

Evangelou et al. (2008)	'Settling into secondary school' questionnaire designed for the study	Measures retrospective concerns, current concerns and post transition concerns using yes/no scales, rating scales and open ended questions.
Harter, Whitesell and Kowalsi (1992)	'The School Work Performance Concerns Questionnaire'	Rating scale questionnaire assessing current concerns over school performance.
Sirsch (2003)	'The Impending Transition to Secondary School Perceived as a Challenge or Threat' (ITCT) designed for the study	Current concerns measured pre-transition on the four subscales; academic challenge, academic threat, social challenge and social threat.
Smith et al. (2008)	'The Perceptions of Transition Survey' adapted from Akos and Galassi (2004)	Rating scale questionnaire assessing pre and post transition concerns on four subscales; academic, organisational, social and preparation for transition.
Thomsson et al. (2006)	'The School Concerns Questionnaire' (SCQ)	Rating scale questionnaire with an open ended component which can be used pre and post transition.
Zeedyk et al. (2003)	Open ended questionnaire designed for the study	Current concerns for pre-transition measured by asking "does anything worry you about secondary?" Retrospective concerns for post-transition measured by asking "when you were in primary, what do you remember worrying about for going up to secondary?"

Table 2: Description of questionnaire measures of school-related concerns. Adapted from Rice et al., (2011)

Rice et al. (2011) argued that the questionnaire based methods of data collection have some methodological issues, including:

- A lack of standardisation;
- Focusing only on one aspect of school concerns;
- Using open ended questions which impose high literacy demands on pupils;
- Having face validity for a particular study on a one off basis;

- Requiring pupil's to self-report retrospectively.

In an attempt to distinguish a valid and reliable measure of transition-concerns, Rice et al. (2011) assessed the validity of the School Concerns Questionnaire (SCQ) at both pre and post transition. Results showed that the SCQ was a reliable measure at both assessment periods. Pupils concerns reduced significantly post transition, as is supported within the literature, and there was concurrent validity between the SCQ and pupil attitudes towards secondary school. Pupils with higher school concerns also reported reduced liking of school, and reduced trust and respect for teachers. It was accepted that the SCQ had discriminate validity, as results correlated with measures of internalising problems but not with measures of adjustment, such as prosocial behaviour (measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Goodman, 1997). The SCQ was also associated with generalised anxiety (measured by Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED), Birmaher, Brent, Chiappetta, Bridge, Monga and Baugher, 1999). Peer problems and depression were associated with pre and post transition concerns, respectively (Rice et al., 2011).

Parent and Child Anxiety

Within clinical populations, it has been recognised that anxiety can present as intergenerational. Bogels & Brechman-Toussant (2005) suggest that, in addition to genetic heritability, there are a range of family factors which can account for intergenerational transmission of anxiety. These include attachment, parenting style, parental modelling, parental negativity, control and family functioning. Eley & Gregory (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 30 behavioural genetic studies of child anxiety, which revealed that environmental factors accounted for approximately 70% of

variance in child anxiety, which is greater than that of additive genetic factors.

Burnstein & Ginsburg (2010) suggest that, given the high estimation of environmental factors contributing to child anxiety, research which aims to explore environmental aspects can provide a 'promising direction' for programmes of intervention.

Modelling of Anxious Behaviours

Muris, Steerneman, Mercklebach & Meesters (1996) suggest that the high level of overlap between parent and child anxiety disorders may be suggestive of children being exposed to anxious parent behaviour, and consequently their modelling anxious behaviour and cognitions. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) children observe and model the behaviours, attitudes and emotional responses of others. Barlow (2000) has further elaborated on Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory in relation to anxiety, suggesting that children may adopt the anxious behaviours and cognitions of their parents via modelling, vicarious learning, and information transmission.

There have been several research papers which have aimed to explore the impact of parental modelling and cognitions on child anxiety. Burnstein & Ginsburg (2010) used an experimental paradigm to investigate the effect of parental modelling of anxious behaviours and cognitions on their child's anxiety levels, anxious cognitions, avoidance, and objective task performance. They found that children endorsed higher levels of anxiety, task avoidance and anxious cognitions when their parent exhibited anxious behaviours, and verbally expressed anxious thoughts related to a task, in comparison to a parent who did not display anxious behaviours and cognitions. The

results suggested that parent's own anxious behaviours and cognitions can augment the probability of similar behaviours and cognitions in their own children.

Threat Bias

There is a body of research that suggests that parent and child threat perceptions are correlated. Children have expressed increased threat interpretations and avoidant responses to ambiguous situations after dialogue with their parent; with increased threat interpretation and consequent avoidant behaviour directly linked to parental anxiety and parental anxious communication (Barrett, Rapee, Dadds, & Ryan, 1996; Chorpita, Albano, & Barlow, 1996; Shortt, Barnett, Dadds, & Fox, 2001).

Gifford, Reynolds, Bill, & Wilson (2008) examined the relationship between child and parent anxiety symptom and threat bias. They found a significant association between a mother's self-reported anxiety and the child's threat bias, suggesting that parental anxiety may be an important factor as a predictor of child threat bias. Lester, Field, Oliver, & Cartwright-Hatton (2009) examined the endorsement of threat bias in non-clinically anxious parents. The results suggested that parental trait anxiety predicted the extent to which parents encourage threat bias in scenarios related to their children. Cartwright-Hatton, Ables, Dixon, Holliday, & Hills (2013) comment that the anxious biases of parents "may spill over into the child's world" and that parents who are anxious have attentional biases towards threats in their child's environment.

Cartwright et al. (2013) hypothesized that parents of anxious children, and parents who are themselves anxious, may be more likely to overestimate potential harm, danger, or threats to their children. It may be argued that parental cognitive bias, such as expectation of threat and anxious beliefs can be transmitted to the child through

behaviours such as modelling or reinforcement of anxiety, anxious communication and control. Muris, Merckelbach, & Meesters (2001) particularly highlight that verbal information from parents is important in the development of anxiety in their children. If this is the case, then it would be of interest to explore whether parent discourses relating to transition mediate child anxiety.

Conclusions leading to current research

The literature review provides strong evidence that transition is a complex process, which can induce some level of anxiety in pupils. Despite an existing body of literature relating to transition, some authors argue that the research pertaining to the primary to secondary transition is quite negligible, especially considering the negative effects of transition that are cited (Topping, 2011).

As anxiety is linked to anxious cognitive processes, such as interpreting ambiguous situations as more threatening, it may be beneficial to consider whether anxious parents hold the same constructs about transition as their children, and if these constructs differ from a non-anxious parent sample. Although there is existing literature exploring whether parent anxious behaviour and cognitions are related to child anxiety, the research is predominately based on a clinical population taking part in an experimental design, or self-report questionnaires. Previous research has not explored the relationship between parent and child anxiety in a 'real world' situation, such as the transition process. To date, there has been limited research which explores whether parent constructs are related to their child's constructs about the primary to secondary transition. There is also an identifiable gap in the literature

regarding parental construction of their child's transition from primary to secondary school.

Relevance to EP Profession

An investigation of parent and child constructs about school transition may help Educational Psychologists to inform their practice and refine interventions to support children who are anxious about school transition. There is a greater call for Educational Psychologists to support vulnerable children and families at a systemic level, rather than the traditional 'within-child' model (Shannon & Posada, 2007). The exploration of parental and child constructs about transition may help to provide further insight into the complex transition process in line with a holistic ecological and socio-cultural framework.

The Present Study and Research Questions

The present research seeks to explore the constructs regarding school transition of parents and children. In addition to this, the research aims to explore if there are any differences between transition anxiety in parents who are identified as anxious and those who are not identified as anxious by addressing the following research questions:

- Is there a difference between anxious and non-anxious parents when reporting measures of transition anxiety?
 - *Research Question 1: Does being an anxious-parent or non-anxious parent effect reported transition concerns in each level of the dyad?*

- Do children construct their views about transition in a similar way to their parents?
 - *Research Question 2: Is there a difference between children's transition anxiety and their parent's transition anxiety using the SCQ?*
 - *Research Question 3: Is there a difference between parental measures of their child's transition anxiety and self-reported measures of transition anxiety from the child?*
 - *Research question 4: Is there a difference between parent's measures of transition anxiety and their proxy measures of their child's anxiety?*
- *Research Question 5: How do parents and children construct the impending transition process?*

References

- Anderson, L.W., Jacobs, J., Schramm, S. and Splittgerber, F. (2000). School Transitions: Beginning of the End or a New Beginning? *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 325-339.
- Aikins, J., Bierman, K. and Parker, J. (2008). Navigating the Transition to Junior High School: The Influence of Pre-Transition Friendship and Self-System Characteristics. *Social Development*, 14, 42-60.
- Akos, P. and Martin, M. (2003). Transition groups for preparing students for middle school. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 28 (2), 139-154.
- Alston, C., Sammons, P. and Mortimore, P. (1985) *The views of primary pupils*. London: ILEA Research and Statistics.
- Ashton, R. (2008). Improving the Transfer to Secondary School: How Every Child's Voice Can Matter. *Support For Learning*, 23, 176-182.
- Ashton, R. (2009). Using the Research and Development in Organisations model to improve transition to high school. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25, 221-232.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Barrett, P.M., Rapee, R. M., Dadds, M. M., & Ryan, S. M. (1996). Family enhancement of cognitive style in anxious and aggressive children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 24, 187-203.
- Bailey, S. and Baines, E. (2012). The impact of risk and resiliency factors on the adjustment of children after the transition from primary to secondary school. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29, 147-63.
- Beach, K.D. (1999) Consequential transitions: A sociocultural expedition beyond transfer in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 101-139.
- Berndt, T. J., Miller, K. E., & Park, K. (1989). Adolescents' perceptions of friends' and parents' influence on aspects of their school adjustment. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 9, 419-435.
- Bloyce, J. and Frederickson, N. (2012). Intervening to improve the transfer to secondary school. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 28, 1-18.

Bogels, S. M., & Brechman-Toussant, M. L. (2005). Family issues in child anxiety: attachment, family functioning, parental rearing and beliefs. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26, 834-856.

Bond, L., Butler, H., Thomas, L., Carlin, J., Glover, S., Bowes, G. and Patton, G. (2007). Social and School Connectedness in Early Secondary School as Predictors of Late Teenage Substance Use, Mental Health, and Academic Outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40, 9-18.

Bore, K. & Fuller, K. (2007) 'Crossing Bridges: ready for transfer?' CB, 5, 17-20. Available online: http://english.hias.hants.gov.uk/file.php/143/Crossing_Bridges_Ready_for_Transfer.pdf [Accessed 01.02.15].

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101.

Brewin, M. and Statham, J. (2011). Supporting the transition from primary school to secondary school for children who are Looked After. *Educational Psychology in Practice: theory, research and practice in educational psychology*, 27(4), 365-381.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993). The ecology of cognitive development: research models and fugitive findings. In R. H. Wozniak and K. W. Fischer (Eds): *Development in context: Acting and thinking in specific environments*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. London: Sage Publications.

Brown, J. M., & Armstrong, R. (1982). The structure of pupil's worries during transition from junior to secondary school. *British Educational Research Journal*, 8, 123-131.

Burgess, S., Johnston, R., Key, T., Propper, C. and Wilson, D. (2008). The transition of pupils from primary to secondary school in England. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33, 388-403.

Burnstein, M., & Ginsburg, G. S., (2010). The effect of parental modelling of anxious behaviours and cognitions in school-aged children: An experimental pilot study. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 48, 506-515.

Burr, V. (1995). *Social Constructionism*. Hove: Routledge.

Carifio, J., & Perla, R. J. (2007). Ten common misunderstandings, misconceptions, persistent myths and urban legends about likert scales and likert response formats and their antidotes. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 3, 106-116.

Carter, E.W., Clark, N.M., Cushing, L.S. and Kennedy, C.H. (2005). Moving from elementary to middle school: Supporting a smooth transition for students with severe disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37(3), 8–14.

Cartwright-Hatton, S., Ables, P., Dixon, C., Holliday, C., & Hills, B. (2013). Does parental anxiety case biases in the processing of child-relevant threat material. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 38, 56-64.

Choi, K. 2012. Supporting transition from primary to secondary school using the Protective Behaviours programme. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29 (3), 27-37.

Chorpita, B. F., Albano, A. M., & Barlow, D.H. (1996). Cognitive Processing in Children: Relation to anxiety and family influences. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 25, 170-176.

Cook, P.J., MacCoun, R., Muschkin, C. and Vigdor, J. (2008). The negative impacts of starting middle school in 6th grade, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27, 104–21.

Crafter, S. and Maunder, R. 2012. Understanding transitions using a sociocultural framework. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29, 10-18.

Creswell, J. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches: 3rd Edition*. Sage Publications.

Deih, L.M., Vicary J.R., & Deike, R.C. (1997). Longitudinal trajectories of self-esteem from early to middle adolescence and related psychosocial variables among rural adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 7, 393-411.

Delamont, S. (1991). The hit list and other horror stories. *Sociological Review*, 39, 238-259.

Demetriou, H., Goalen, P. & Rudduck, J. (2000). Academic performance, transfer, transition and friendship: Listening to the student voice. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 425-441.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). 2004. *A National Conversation about Personalised Learning*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

Dunsmuir, S. and Stringer, P. 2012. Guest Editorial. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29 (3), 6-7.

Eccles, J.S., Lord, S.E., Roeser, R.W., Barber, B.L., & Hernandez Jozefowicz, D.M. (1997). In J. Schulenberg, J.L. Maggs, & K. Hurrelmann. (Eds). *HealthRisks and Developmental Transitions during Adolescence* (pp. 283-320). Cambridge University Press, UK.

Eccles, J.S. and Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational Beliefs, Values and Goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 22, 109-133.

Eley, T. C., & Gregory, A. M., (2004). Behavioural Genetics. In: Morris, T.L. *Anxiety Disorders in Children and Adolescents*. 2nd Ed. New York City, The Guilford Press (2004) pp71-96.

Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. and Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2008). *What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School?* DCSF: Institute of Education; London.

Fenzel, L.M. (2000). Prospective study of changes in global self-worth and strain during the transition to middle school. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 20, 93–116.

Finn. D. (1989). Withdrawing from School. *Review of Educational Research*, 59, 117-142.

Galton, M., and Willcocks, J. (1983). (Eds.). *Moving from the primary school*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Galton, M., Gray, J., Ruddock, J. (1999). The Impact of School Transitions and Transfers on Pupil Progress and Attainment. *Transitions and Transfers: A Review*.

Galton, M., & Morrison, I. (2000). Concluding comments. Transfer and transition: The next steps. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 443-449.

Galton, M., Morrison, I. and Pell, T. (2000). Transfer and Transition in English Schools: Reviewing the Evidence. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 341-364.

Gifford, S., Reynolds, S., Bill, S., & Wilson, C. (2008). Threat interpretation bias in anxious children and their mothers. *Cognition and Emotion*, 22, 497-508.

Gillison, F., Standage, M. and Skevington, S. (2008). Changes in Quality of Life and Psychological Need Satisfaction Following the Transition to Secondary School. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 149-162.

Gorgorió, N., Planas, N., & Vilella, X. (2002). Immigrant children learning mathematics in mainstream schools. In Abreu, G. de, Bishop, A., & Presmeg, N.C. (Eds.) *Transitions between contexts of mathematical practice* (pp.23-52). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Graham, C. and Hill, M. 2003. *Negotiating the Transition to Secondary School. Spotlight 39*. University of Glasgow: The SCRE Centre.

Grills-Tauechel, A., Norton, P. and Ollendick, T. 2010. A longitudinal examination of factors predicting anxiety during the transition to middle school. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping: An International Journal*, 23, 493-513.

Gulati, A. and King, A. (2010). *Supporting Vulnerable Young People in Transition: Addressing Poverty of Wellbeing*. Bristol: The Quartet Community Foundation and Society of Merchant Venturers.

Harter, S. (1999). *The construction of the self: A developmental perspective*. New York: Guilford.

Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (2001). Troubled transition: how to ensure that educational transition points do not interrupt student learning. *Research Information for Teachers*, 3, 29-32.

Hertzog, C.J., Morgan, P.L., Diamond, P.A. and Walker, M.J. (1996). Transition to high school: A look at students' perceptions. *Becoming*, 7(2), 6–8.

Hodson, P., Baddely, A., Laycock, S., & Williams, S. (2005). Helping secondary schools to be more inclusive of year 7 pupils with SEN. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 21, 53-67.

Howe, A. (2011). Introduction: Exploring the great divide. In A. Howe and V. Richards (Eds): *Bridging the Transition from Primary to Secondary School*. New York: Routledge.

- Humphrey, N. and Ainscow, M. (2006). Transition club: Facilitating learning, participation and psychological adjustment during the transition to secondary school. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 21, 319-331.
- Jindal-Snape, D. and Foggie, J. (2008). A Holistic Approach to Primary-Secondary Transitions. *Improving Schools*, 11, 5-18.
- Jindal-Snape, D. and Miller, D.J. (2008). A Challenge of Living? Understanding the Psycho-Social Processes of the Child during Primary-secondary Transition through Resilience and Self-Esteem Theories. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 217-236.
- Jindal-Snape, D., and Miller, J.D. (2010). Understanding transitions through self-esteem and resilience. In Educational transitions: *Moving stories from around the world*, ed. D. Jindal-Snape, 11–32. New York: Routledge.
- Jordan, J.A., McRorie, M. and Ewing, C. (2010). Gender Differences in the Role of Emotional Intelligence during the Primary-Secondary School Transition. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 15, 37-47.
- Koizumi, R. (1999). The development of optimism and perceived attainment from elementary school to junior high school. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 41, 209-217.
- Lester, K. J., Field, A. P., Oliver, S., & Cartwright-Hatton, S. (2009). Do anxious parents' interpretive biases towards threat extend into their child's environment? *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 47, 170–174
- Lohaus, A., C. Elben, J. Ball, and J. Klein-Hessling. 2004. School transition from elementary to secondary school: Changes in psychological adjustment. *Educational Psychology*, 4, 161–73.
- Lucey, H. & Reay, D. (2000). Identities in transition: Anxiety and excitement in the move to secondary school. *Oxford Review of Education*, 26, 119–215.
- Marteau, T. M., & Bekker, H. (1992). The Development of a six-item short-form of the State Scale of the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 31, 301-306.

Maunder, R.; Gingham, J. & Rogers, J. (2010). Transition in higher education: exploring the experience of first and second year psychology undergraduate students. *Psychology of Education Review*, 34, 50-54.

McGee. C., Ward. R., Gibbon. J., & Harlow. A. (2004). *Transition to Secondary School: A Literature Review*. Hamilton: The University of Wikato.

Meyer, W., Moore, C., & Viljoen, H. (2003). *Personology, from individual to ecosystem* (4th ed.). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.

Mizelle. N. B. (1999). Helping middle school children make the transition into high school. ERIC digest. ED432411. Available online <http://ericir.syr.edu/plweb-cgi/obtain.pl> [Accessed 02.08.13].

Mullins. E. R., & Irvin. J. L. (2000). Transition into Middle School. What Research Says? *Middle School Journal*, 31, 57-60.

Muris, P., Steerneman, P., Mercklebach, H., & Meesters, C. (1996). The role of parental fearfulness and modelling in children's fear. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 34, 265-268.

Muris, P., Merckelbach, H., & Meesters, C. (2001). Learning experiences and anxiety sensitivity in normal adolescents. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioural Assessment*, 23, 279-283.

Newman. T. & Blackburn. S. (2002) *Transitions in the Lives of Children and Young People: Resilience Factors*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Education Department.

Osborn, M., McNess, E. and Pollard, A. (2006). Identity and transfer: A new focus for home-school knowledge exchange. *Educational Review*, 58, 415–433.

Otis. N., Grouzet. F., & Pelletier. L. G. (2005). Latent motivational change in an academic setting: A 3 year longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97, 170-183.

Pointon P (2000) Students' views of environments for learning from the primary to the secondary school, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 375-382

Qualter P., Whiteley H., Hutchinson, J. and Pope D. (2007). Supporting the development of emotional intelligence competencies to ease the transition from primary to high school. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 23, 79-95.

Rice, F., Frederickson, N. and Seymour, J. (2011). Assessing Pupil Concerns about Transition to Secondary School. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 244-263.

Richards, V. (2011). Adolescent development. In A. Howe and V. Richards (Eds): *Bridging the Transition from Primary to Secondary School*. New York: Routledge.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research: Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings: 3rd Edition*. Padstow: Wiley.

Roderick, M. (1993). *The Path of Dropping Out*. Westport, CT: Auburn House.

Rudduck, J. (1996). Going to the 'big school': the turbulence of transition. In J. Rudduck, R. Chaplain & G. Wallace (Eds). *School Improvement: What Can Pupils Tell Us?* London: David Fulton Publishers.

Rudolph, K., Lambert, S., Clark, A. and Kurlakowsky, K. (2001). Negotiating the transition to middle school: the role of self-regulatory processes. *Child Development*, 72, 929-46.

Sancho, M. (2010). Psychological Processes during Primary-Secondary School Transition. *DECP Conference 2010 presentation*. Available online http://www.ucl.ac.uk/educationalpsychology/resources/Sancho_Transition_Jan%2010.pdf. [Accessed 01.08.13].

Schneider, B., Tomada, G., Normand, S., Tonci, E., and de Domini, P. (2008). Social support as a predictor of school bonding and academic motivation following the transition to Italian middle school. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25, 287-310.

Schumacher, D. (1998). *The Transition to Middle School*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement: Washington, DC. Schwandt, T.A. (1996). Farewell to Criteriology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2, 58-72.

Shannon, D., & Posada, S. (2007). The Educational Psychologist in the Early Years: Current practice and future directions. *Educational Psychology in Practice: theory, research and practice in educational psychology*, 23, 257-272.

Shaw, J. (1995). *Education, Gender and Anxiety*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Shepherd, J., & Roker, D. (2005). *An evaluation of a 'transition to secondary school' project run by the National Pyramid Trust*. Brighton; Trust for the Study of Adolescents.

Shortt, A. L., Barrett, P.M., Dadds, M.R., & Fox, T.L. (2001) The influence of family and experimental context on cognition in anxious children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 29, 585-596.

Simmons, R.G., & Blythe, D.A., (1987). *Moving into Adolescence: The Impact of Pubertal Change and School Context*. Hawthorn, NY, Aldine and Gruyler.

Sirsch U. (2003). The impending transition from primary to secondary school: Challenge or threat? *International Journal of Behavioural Development*, 27, 385–395.

Spielberger, C. D., Gorsuch, R. L., & Lushene, R. E. (1970). *State-trait anxiety inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologist's Press.

Smith, H. (2011). The emotional impact of transfer and what can be learned from early years practice. In A. Howe and V. Richards (Eds): *Bridging the Transition from Primary to Secondary School*. New York: Routledge.

Smith. J. S., Akos. P., Lim. S., & Wiley. S. (2008). Student and stakeholder perceptions of the transition to high school. *High School Journal*, 91, 32-42.

Stradling, R., & McNeil, M. (2000). *Moving on: the emotional well being of young people in transition from primary to secondary school*. Report published by Highland Heath Board of Scotland Inverness: Highland Heath Board.

Stringer, P. and Dunsmuir, S. (2012). Guest Editorial. *Educational and Child Psychology* 29, 6-9.

Sutherland, R., Yee, W., McNess E. and Harris R. (2010). *Supporting Learning in the Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools*. University of Bristol.

Tobbell, J. (2003). Students' Experiences of the Transition from Primary to Secondary School. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 20 (4), 4-14.

Thomasson, R., Field, L., O'Donnell, C., and Woods, S. (2006). *School Concerns Questionnaire*. Buckinghamshire: Buckinghamshire County Council.

Topping, K. (2011). Primary-Secondary Transition: Differences between Teachers' and Children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14, 268-285.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. London: Harvard University Press.

Waters, S., Lester, L., & Cross, D. (2012). A Theoretically Grounded Exploration of the Social and Emotional Outcomes of Transition to Secondary School. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 22, 190-205.

Watt, H. M. G. (2000). Measuring attitudinal change in mathematics and English over the 1st year of junior high school: A multidimensional analysis. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 68, 331-361.

Weller, S. 2007. Sticking with your mates? Children's friendship trajectories during the transition from primary to secondary school. *Children & Society*, 21, 339-351.

Wenger, E (2000). Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems. *Organization*, 7, 225-246.

Wertsch, J. 2005. Essay Review: Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 23, 143-151.

West, P., Sweeting, H., and Young, R. (2008). Transition matters: Pupil's expectations of the primary- secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. *Research Papers in Education*, 25, 21-50.

Whitby, K., Lord, P., O'Donnell, S. and Grayson, H. (2006). *Dips in Performance and Motivation: A Purely English Perception?* International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks. Available online http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Final_Dip_Report.pdf [Accessed 08.09.14].

Wigfield, A. and Eccles, J. S. (2002). Children's motivation during the middle school years. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement: Contributions of social psychology* (pp. 159-184). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Wood, L.L., Sylvester, L. and Martin, J.E. (2010). Student-Directed Transition Planning: Increasing Student Knowledge and Self-Efficacy in the Transition Planning Process. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 33, 106-114.

Zeedyk, M.S., Gallagher, J., Henderson, M., Hope, G., Husband, B. and Lindsay, K. (2003). Negotiating the transition from primary to secondary school: perceptions of pupils, parents and teachers. *School Psychology International*, 24, 67–79.

Zittoun, (2004). Symbolic competencies for developmental transitions: The case of the choice of first names. *Culture & Psychology*, 10, 131-161.

Zittoun, T. (2006). *Transitions: Development through symbolic resources*. Greenwich: Information age publishing.



Parent and child constructions of the primary-secondary school transition

Part B: Research Journal Article

Abstract

The transition from primary to secondary school has been identified as a critical moment in a child's educational career, which can have implications for their emotional well-being and educational and social outcomes. The majority of literature relating to transition has focused on three main areas; the effects of transition on academic attainment and well-being, pupil's experience of transition, and predictors of difficult transition. This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of pupils' transition experiences by exploring an area which is, to date, under-researched.

The study explores child and parent constructions relating to transition within a population of primary school pupils who have been identified as 'vulnerable'. A mixed method approach was utilised to explore parent and child constructions of the primary to secondary transition and whether transition anxiety differs in parent-child dyads that consist of an anxious parent or a non-anxious parent.

A sample comprising of 37 parent-child dyads from a single Local Authority participated in the first stage of research. The parents of these children were divided into two groups following the completion of the STAI; anxious parents and non-anxious parents. Each member of the dyad completed a quantitative measure of transition related concerns which were then statistically analysed in relation to the research questions.

In addition to the quantitative measures, 11 parent-child dyads participated in individual semi-structured interviews to further explore their construction related to transition. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Five themes were found: growth, information gathering, adaptation, struggling with discontinuity and feelings of hope.

The implications of findings are discussed in relation to the role of Educational Psychologists and Educational Professionals. Further directions for research are considered, alongside the limitations of the present study.

Introduction

Transition

The purpose of the following study is to explore parent and child constructions relating to the primary-secondary transition, with a particular focus on children who have been identified as vulnerable. Despite the acknowledgment that transition is a complex process, where pupils are required to successfully navigate multiple emotional, social, organisational, cognitive and systemic changes (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber, 2000; Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012), there appears to be 'gaps' in transition research. Topping (2011) argues that the research pertaining to the primary to secondary transition is quite negligible, especially considering the negative effects of transition that are cited.

It has been suggested that transition can impact significantly upon pupils' psychological, social, emotional, and cognitive development (as described in table 1 of the literature review). The literature consistently accepts that transition is an anxiety provoking experience for many young people, with evidence suggesting that vulnerable pupils are significantly more at risk of being adversely affected by transition, in contrast to their less vulnerable counterparts (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). It is reasoned that vulnerable pupils may have increased exposure to risk factors at the individual, family and community level.

Theoretical models relating to transition have acknowledged the important interplay of systemic relationships on the pupils' transition experience. The Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and Socio-Cultural Model (Vgotsky, 1978) both stress the importance of relationships and social interactions on learning processes in complex contexts, such as transition. Despite theorising that relationships and social interactions are pivotal in learning processes, there is little research which explores the role that parents play in their child's transition. Instead the majority of research has chosen to concern itself with perception of pupils, dips in attainment and wellbeing and predictors of poorer transitions (West, Sweeting and Young, 2008).

Evidence of transmission of anxiety between parent and child

There is an abundance of literature which seeks to address whether a relationship exists between parental anxiety and child anxiety, however there is limited research that considers parent and child anxiety within the context of secondary transition. Various theoretical frameworks and models have been proposed for anxiety transmission outside of genetic heritability (such as social learning theory, information processing bias, threat bias and the verbal exchange of anxious cognitions), but little has been applied to the field of education, let alone transition. Given that anxiety is such a strong theme within transition literature it could be argued that further exploration is warranted. There has been a plethora of anecdotal evidence that parental concerns around schooling affects their child's constructs of school, which is yet to be explored within research. A socio-cultural view of transition also supports this assertion.

Rationale for research

The review of the literature provides strong evidence that transition is a complex process, which can induce anxiety in the majority of pupils. However, there are identifiable gaps in transition research.

Although there is a strong theme of transition anxiety in the literature, there has been no attempt to date to explore whether parents can play a role in their child's transition anxieties. As anxiety is linked to anxious cognitive processes, such as interpreting ambiguous situations as more threatening, it may be advantageous to consider whether anxious parents hold the same level of concern about transition as their children, and if this concern differs from a non-anxious parent sample. To date, there has been no research which explores whether parent constructs are related to their child's constructs about transition. There is also an identifiable gap in the literature regarding parental constructions of their child's transition from primary to secondary school.

Research questions

The current study seeks to explore the following research questions:

- Is there a difference between anxious and non-anxious parents when reporting measures of transition anxiety?
 - *Research Question 1: Does being an anxious-parent or non-anxious parent effect reported transition concerns in each level of the dyad?*
- Do children report similar levels of transition anxiety as their parents?
 - *Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference between children's transition anxiety and their parent's transition anxiety?*
- How attuned are parents to their child's transition anxiety?
 - *Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between parental measures of their child's transition anxiety and self-reported measures of transition anxiety from the child?*
- Do parents report a difference in their levels of transition anxiety compared to their child?
 - *Research question 4: Is there a significant difference between parental measures of transition anxiety and their proxy measures of their child's anxiety?*
- *Research Question 5: How do parents and children construct the impending transition process?*

The current study

Ontology and Epistemology

This research acknowledges that individual's hold unique constructs and interpretations, rather than the presence of a single 'reality'. The research is guided by a pragmatic paradigm and focused on 'what works' as the truth regarding the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003b, p. 713). This allows the freedom to link theory to method in "different ways deemed appropriate" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998. P.30).

The research employs a mixed methods design, which combines the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The epistemology of the research draws upon elements of both post positivism and constructivism. By using a mixed methods approach, the research aims to acquire a rich data set by using different strategies.

Hammersley (2002) support this assertion by reasoning that using a combination of qualitative and quantitative can generate a more comprehensive picture.

Ethical considerations

The British Psychological Society's (2006) Code of Ethics and Conduct was consulted to guide the ethical considerations of this study in accordance with Robson's (2002) assertion that it is vital for researchers to give serious thought to the ethical aspects of their research.

It was recognised that ethical issues are potentially heightened when working with vulnerable children, and consequently the research was mindful to take precautions to protect the participants from any harm. Steps were made to preserve participants' psychological well-being throughout the research. A solution-focused approach was adopted during the interview and consent was re-established throughout the research. Participants were asked to give feedback on how they felt after taking part in the research and appropriate support and signposting was offered where needed. Participants were given the option for concerns to be shared with the transition leader of the secondary school. Both parents and children reported that they felt reassured that information was shared as part of transition planning.

Brykczynska (1989) argued that it is vital that any research conducted with children should only be done to benefit the child or benefit other children in future. It was felt that this exploration of parent and child constructs relating to transition would validly contribute to the existing research base and help professionals to better understand the transition process.

An ethical research proposal was submitted to, and approved by Cardiff University Ethics Committee.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were initially identified through a Local Authority (LA) Transition Project, which sought to support 'vulnerable' pupils. As part of the project, all primary schools were asked to identify pupils using a questionnaire developed by the LA. The

questionnaire was completed by either the year 6 class teacher or the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). The first section of the questionnaire was adapted from questions from the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (Teacher Version). Schools were asked to consider if any of the pupils in their Year 6 class showed observable indicators of anxiety, such as '*often complains of headaches or stomach aches*' and '*is often distressed when arriving at school*'. The second part of the questionnaire asked schools to consider demographic and personal characteristics which have been identified within transition literature as predictors for more difficult transitions. These included identifying pupils with:

- Low self-esteem (Aikins et al. (2005) and low self-concept (Sirch (2003))
- Additional learning needs or disabilities (Humphrey and Ainsow, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012)
- Social and emotional difficulties (Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012)
- Previous issues with bullying
- Significant gaps in attendance during primary education.

The pupils identified were then invited to take part in an enhanced transition programme. For the current research, two secondary schools were identified based on the stage of the transition project that they were at, at the time of the research. The research required that pupils had been identified for enhanced transition, but had not yet taken part in additional support through the project. From the two secondary schools, six feeder primary schools were identified.

To recruit participants, a gatekeeper letter (appendix Ai), with information about the research project, including the projected timescale, information about consent, confidentiality and anonymity, was sent to the Head Teacher of the primary school. Out of the six primary schools, five consented for the researcher to invite pupils and parents to take part in the research. The one school which did not consent cited systemic reasons, such as the research time frame conflicting with activities pre-arranged in school.

Within the five primary schools, all of the pupils who were eligible for the transition project were invited to take part in the research. Letters were sent out to parents with

information about the research, consent, confidentiality and anonymity (Appendix Aii). Parents were asked to give consent for both themselves and their child. Consent was also sought from the child at each stage of the research. The letters to parents also contained an anxiety screening measure, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), which was used to identify two parental groups (anxious and non-anxious) from those who consented to take part in the research.

For the first stage of the study 37 parent-child dyads participated (74 participants in total). At the time of data collection, all pupils were attending a mainstream primary school and were in year 6. All pupils were due to transition to a mainstream secondary school in the new academic year. The 37 dyads consisted of 26 anxious parent dyads and 11 non-anxious parent dyads.

	Male (n)	Female (n)
Child (N= 37)	19 (51%)	18 (49%)
Parent (N=37)	2 (5%)	35 (95%)

Table 3: Participant numbers by gender for stage 1

Of the 37 children who took part in the first stage of the research, the following concerns were shared by their primary school through the LA identification questionnaire:

	Male (n=19)	Female (n=18)
SEN and/ or disability	13	9
Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties	16	17
Attendance Gaps	2	2
Observable anxiety in school	6	8

Formal diagnosis of anxiety or related disorder by CAMHS	1	2
Previous experiences with bullying	8	11

Table 4: vulnerability factors identified by participants' primary schools

It is important to note that the above categories are not discrete. The majority of the pupils (n=34) were considered by school to have needs in more than one area. 'SEN and/ or disability' and 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' were the highest co-occurrence of needs, with 22 pupils being identified as having a need in both categories.

All participants were invited to take part in the second stage of the research. The retention rate was quite low, with only 11 dyads taking part. Common reasons cited was lack of parental time available, or inconvenience of the research time frame. Despite having a low retention rate between the two phases of research, it was felt that 22 interviews were adequate, providing a rich data set with saturation of themes.

	Male (n)	Female (n)
Child (N=11)	6 (55%)	5 (45%)
Parent (N=11)	1 (9%)	10 (91%)

Table 5: Participant numbers by gender for stage 2

Procedure and Materials

The research began with an identification phase. As already described, vulnerable pupils were identified through a LA transition project. Parents were initially screened to identify those who self-reported as being anxious, and those who self-reported as being non-anxious. Parents who consented to take part in the study completed the STAI in order to identify the two parental groups (anxious and non-anxious). The STAI is a frequently used measure of trait and state anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983). Studies have shown that it is a sensitive predictor of caregiver

anxiety over time, and that it can vary with changes in support systems, health, and other individual characteristics (Elliott, Shewchuk, & Richards, 2001; Shewchuk, Richards & Elliott, 1998). Considerable evidence attests to the construct and concurrent validity of the scale (Spielberger, 1989).

Once participants had been identified, phase one of the research took place. All parents completed quantitative measures to evaluate their anxiety related to transition. The School Concerns Questionnaire (SCQ) (Thomasson, Field, O'Donnell & Woods, 2006) was used as a quantitative measure of concern regarding school transition. The SCQ comprises of a 19 item Likert scale, where participants rate how anxious they are about aspects of secondary school life on a scale of 1 to 10. The SCQ also gives the opportunity for participants to write down and rate up to two additional concerns. Although the SCQ has only been used with a child population, parent participants were asked to rate *their* level of transition concern using the SCQ. Each parent completed the quantitative measures individually, in the absence of their child. The majority of Parents (n=35) completed the questionnaire in their child's primary school in a room with the researcher, who was available answer any questions on how to complete the measure. Two parents completed the quantitative measure during a home visit. After a period of 15 minutes where parents were engaged in problem free talk, they were then asked to provide a proxy rating of how concerned they felt their *child* was on each item. Pupils were also asked to complete the SCQ, providing a measure of how concerned they were about each of the transition issues. Each pupil (n=37) completed the SCQ individually in a quiet room in their primary school with the researcher, in order to provide a measure of their own transition concerns.

Rice, Fredrickson & Seymour (2011) assessed the validity of the SCQ in a pupil population and found that the measure was a simple, reliable and valid tool to assess primary-secondary school concerns. The SCQ has not been previously used in an adult population to rate transition concerns that parents hold, nor has it been used as a measurement of parent proxy rating of child concerns. The reliability of the SCQ in this sample population was explored and is reported in the results.

The second phase of the research involved parents and their child taking part in semi-structured interviews to explore their constructs relating to transition. A pilot interview

was held with one parent and one child, independently. The pilot was valuable in ensuring that the questions were understandable and effective in eliciting valid and relevant information relating to the research questions. As the pilot study did not significantly alter the interview schedule, the pilot interviews were included in the main data set. The interview schedule consisted of 16 questions, which were developed by the researcher by considering the existing literature and the research aims. Each interview lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. Each parent and child within a dyad was interviewed on the same day, with the parent interview and child interviews conducted independently.

Analysis and Results

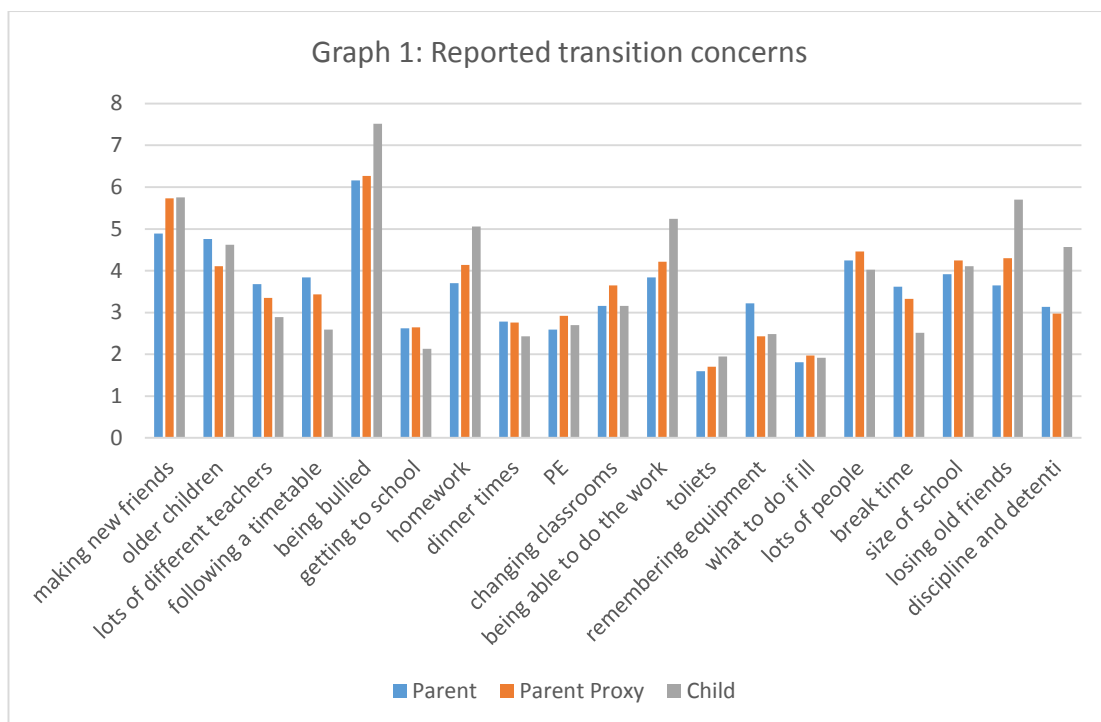
The analysis was separated into two parts; quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative

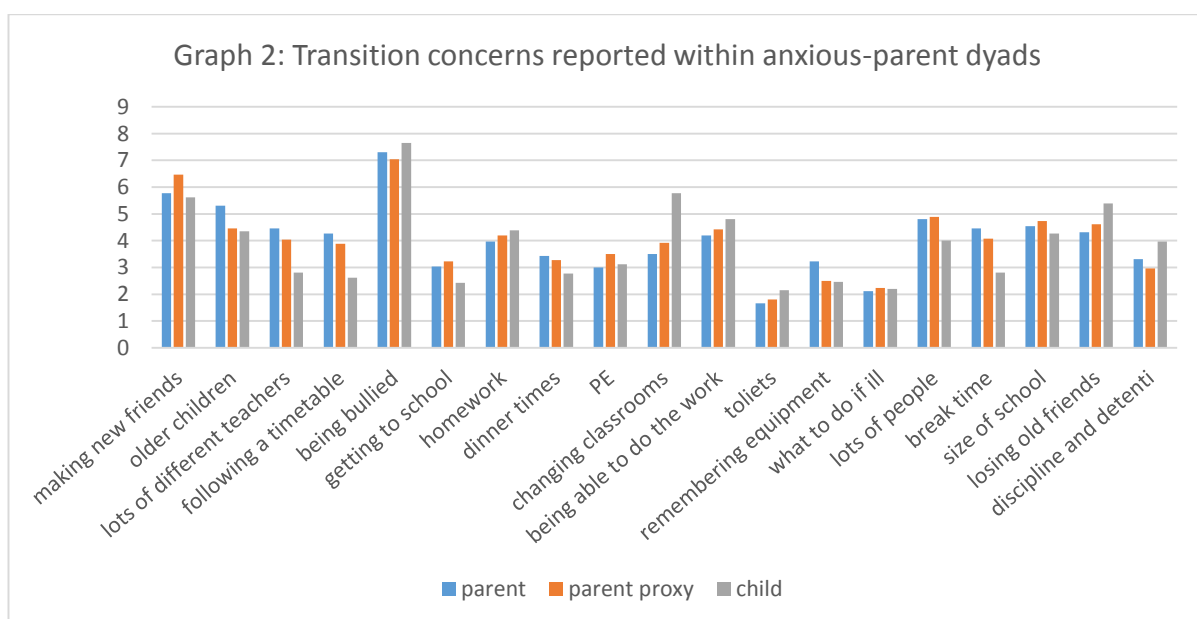
Consideration was given as to whether the SCQ could be analysed using parametric or non-parametric methods. Literature was reviewed in order to ascertain whether Likert scale data should be treated as ordinal or interval. As all of the items on the SCQ measured an underlying construct of anxiety, it was initially decided that parametric methods would be appropriate (Carifio and Perla, 2007). However, the data did not meet the assumptions of normality (using the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality) or the condition of sphericity (using the Mauchly's test of Sphericity). As the assumption of a normal distribution curve was not met, it was deemed appropriate to carry out non-parametric analysis of the data.

SPSS was used to analyse the data. Statistical significance was inferred at the traditional 0.05 level. The reliability of the SCQ in this sample population was investigated.

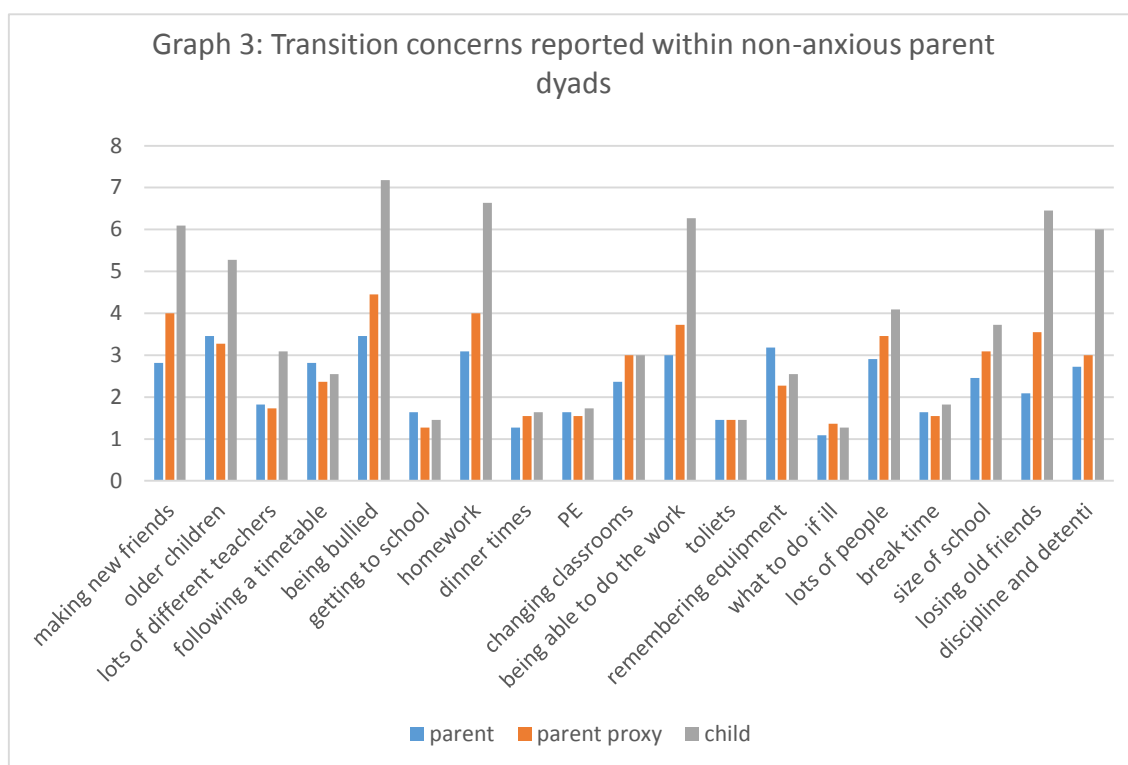
Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the underlying unitary construct of anxiety in parent, parent proxy and child measures. The SCQ showed high reliability with Cronbach's alpha of greater than .70 in all measures. A mean score (between one and ten) was therefore calculated for each participant for data analysis to provide an overall measure of transition anxiety. High scores indicate greater concerns. The mean scores for each item on the SCQ is shown in Graph 1.



To address the research questions, the data could be split to explore transition concerns for dyads consisting of an anxious parent, and dyads consisting of a non-anxious parent. Graph 2 shows the mean of each transition concern on the SCQ for each measure within the anxious-parent dyads.



Comparatively, Graph 3 illustrates the mean of each transition concern on the SCQ for each measure within the non-anxious parent dyads. Figure 1 shows which things children and parents found most concerning about the impending transition.



	Highest reported child concerns	Highest reported parent concerns	Highest reported parent- proxy concerns
1	Being bullied	Being bullied	Being bullied
2	Losing old friends	Making new friends	Making friends
3	Making new friends	Older children	Lots of people
4	Being able to do the work	Lots of people	Losing old friend
5	Homework	Size of the school	Size of the school

Table 6: Highest pupil and parent transition concerns

Quantitative Results

Research Question 1: Does being an anxious-parent or non-anxious parent effect reported transition concerns in each level of the dyad?

Mann Whitney U tests were conducted to determine if there were any differences between the groups (anxious-parents versus non-anxious parents) and if they had a significant impact on dyad responses. The Mann Whitney U test evaluates whether the medians on a test variable differ between two groups.

Results

Transition concerns in non-anxious parent dyads did not differ significantly from anxious parent dyads on the child reports of transition concerns, $U = 166.00$, $z = .765$, ns, $r = 0.13$.

However, parent transition concerns in anxious parents were significantly higher than in non-anxious parents, $U = 20.00$, $z = -4.090$, $p < 0.05$, $r = -0.67$.

Parental proxy reports of their child's concerns were also significantly higher for anxious parents compared to non-anxious parents, $U = 45.00$, $z = -3.258$, $p < 0.05$, $r = -0.54$.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference between child anxiety and their parent's anxiety?

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests were carried out to investigate where there was a significant difference between the measures within the dyads. The data file was split to determine significance between the anxious-parent and non-anxious parent dyads.

Child transition anxiety in the anxious parent group was not significantly different to their parent's transition anxiety, $z = -1.308$, $p > 0.05$, $r = -.26$, however child transition anxiety in the non-anxious parent group was significantly higher than the parents transition anxiety, $z = 2.934$, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.88$.

Research Question 3: Is there a difference between parental measures of their child's anxiety and self-reported measures of anxiety from the child?

Parent proxy transition anxiety in the anxious parent group was not significantly different to their child's anxiety, $z = .772$, $p > 0.05$, $r = .15$, however parent proxy anxiety in the non-anxious parent group was significantly lower than their child's self-reported transition anxiety, $z = -2.936$, $p < 0.05$, $r = -.89$.

Research question 4: Is there a difference between parent's measures of transition anxiety and their proxy measures of their child's anxiety?

Parent proxy anxiety in the anxious parent group was not significantly different to their own measure of transition anxiety, $z = -.161$, $p > 0.05$, $r = -.05$, however parent proxy anxiety in the non-anxious parent group was significantly higher than their own measures of anxiety, $z = -2.191$, $p < 0.05$, $r = -.43$.

Qualitative Analysis

The data collected during the semi structured interviews was analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic Analysis is a flexible way to interpret data, allowing the researcher to determine themes and 'prevalence' in a number of ways.

The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Initial themes were noted during the interviews by the researcher. Each individual interview was then transcribed by the researcher as a way to become immersed with the data. Further notes on potential themes were made during the transcription stage. Once each interview had been transcribed, first order coding occurred. The first order coding was descriptive in nature and involved identifying 'chunks' of data which were considered to be meaningful by the researcher. Second order coding further sought to develop these descriptive notes in to a deeper interpretation of what participants had shared. From the initial codes, labels were developed which captured meaningful groups of codes within each interview. A third stage of coding was utilised where the whole data set was considered to draw out overarching themes amongst all of the interviews. By looking for patterns of themes across the whole data set, overarching themes which captured and reflected the participant's construction of transition in a meaningful way were generated.

Results

Research Question 5: How do parents and children construct the impending transition process?

The data set was analysed as a whole using thematic analysis and six primary themes were identified. Each of the primary themes also generated subthemes, as illustrated in the final Thematic Map (figure 1).

growth	information gathering and sharing	adaptation	struggling with discontinuity	feelings of hope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities for multiple areas of development • outgrowing primary school • increasing independence and control • transition as a time for maturity • resistance to growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information sharing as a means to reassure • information sharing increasing worries • being a 'closed book' • information gained through active experience • information derived from previous experience • urban myths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • redefinition and a fresh start • 'blending in'- establishing belonging through adaptation • social competence as a barrier and facilitator to adapt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of loss • no longer understanding needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problems are temporary • protective factors

Figure 1: Final Thematic Map

Theme 1: Growth

A theme of growth was heavily prevalent in the data set, with almost all participants referencing it during their interview. Transition was viewed as an opportunity for growth in several different areas, such as academic growth, growth in skills and competencies, and self-growth; both physically and intrinsically. Both parents and children predominately focused on the implications for the child in terms of growth during transition. However there were some instances where parents and children acknowledged the impact of growth on the adults. The theme of growth consisted of 5 subthemes

Subtheme 1: Opportunities for multiple areas of development.

Both parents and children shared that transition provided opportunities for social, emotional and academic growth. The opportunity for new lessons was shared by all participants as a positive aspect of moving up to secondary school. Two of the parents acknowledged that the organisational and social changes between primary and secondary school would *force* their child to adapt and develop new competencies, sharing “...it’s the social side and the confidence which she needs to build on. It will almost be forced upon her in some ways. But it will be a good thing...” [Parent 1, line

178} and *“...He’ll be forced to grow up I think and learn more, hopefully. The transformation is starting now...”* [Parent 7, line 52]. By using the word ‘force’ it may be constructed that the parents acknowledged the transition process as a change which was out of their child’s control. However, both parents felt that, despite the lack of control, transition would result in positive outcomes and the development of new skills. One parent reasoned that transition would bring about opportunities that would take their child out of their comfort zone, sharing that the move to secondary school would give their child an opportunity to do *“...stuff that she wouldn’t normally think to do, but will actually be good...”* [Parent 1, line 189]. The majority of parents (n=9) felt that transition would be an opportunity for their child to develop. Some parents focussed on the new skills that their child would learn as a result of the changes in curriculum, *“...I think more opportunities to learn skills like the cooking. That extra additional support and after school activities will be good for ****...”* [Parent 1, line 171], whereas other parents felt that their child’s social skills would develop as a consequence of moving to secondary school, *“...He will develop more social skills and things because he will be able to mix with a variety of people and older people as well who can be a role model for him. So I think it will be a lot better for him...”* [Parent 5, line 107].

Several of the child participants also referenced the opportunity to develop new skills as a consequence of transition. In particular, one child felt that the new skills they would develop when they went to secondary school were reflective of the skills possessed by adults, *“...the work with be more grown up and I will learn grown up stuff like how to cook and have to do things more by myself...f”* [Child 11, line 98]. A high number of children (n=7) shared particular excitement about the opportunity to do lessons that were considered a new experience, such as Design Technology, ICT and Food Technology.

Subtheme 2: Outgrowing Primary School.

Although this theme was not evident in the parent data set, it was a salient theme of the child data set. Several children (7) referenced that they were ready to move up to their secondary school because they had ‘outgrown’ their primary; *“...It’s good, but it’s*

a bit too small for me now..." [Child 7, line 113] and *"...in this school where I am right now I'm getting used to it and it is kinda small for me..."* [Child 2, line 20]. With the exception of one child, positive words were used to describe their primary school, but there was a consistent sense of readiness to move on to secondary school due to feelings of outgrowing their primary environment.

The theme of outgrowing primary school was described both in terms of physically outgrowing and psychologically outgrowing primary school. A distinction was drawn between the physical size of primary school compared to secondary school, with many children sharing that the larger environment of a secondary school had come at the right time for them. *"...I think we are too big for this school now. It used to be big to me, but now it just feels small..."* [Child 8, line 392]. One child reflected on his growth within the primary school, *"...I am the oldest now but I used to be the youngest. So I probably need a bigger school now really?..."* [Child 2, line 59], reasoning that he needed to go to secondary school as part of his on-going development.

Subtheme 3: Increasing independence and control

Both parents and children felt that transition was a time when children could increase their independence, autonomy and control. Some parents worried that their child did not have the resources to cope with a big change in independence, and noted the shift in control from parent to child. *"...Being independent with money for a start, isn't it? (Laughs) I haven't got the control (laughs)..."* [Parent 7, line 47]. However, several parents acknowledged the shift in control from parent to child as an inevitable part of growing up. A number of parents (n=6), shared that the increased independence and control during transition would help their child to navigate transition independently, drawing on their own skills. *"...He said it's a fresh start, so he may just be able to do it by himself..."* [Parent 8, line 186].

Increased independence was generally constructed by children as a positive change. A surprising number of children (n=6) made particular reference to being able to independently structure how and what they eat in secondary school. *"...Now when I am hungry I can't just have a snack, but up there I can..."* [Child 7, line 151]. The daily

autonomy to choose food was considered to be a positive step in increasing their independence, in terms of both choice *"...It's good, it's exciting because I will get to choose what I want to eat instead of someone just giving me things. It's my choice. When I go up I'll be able to choose myself so I'll be happier I think..."* [Child 11, line 103] and responsibility *"...now I will be in charge of the money. It's good..."* [Child 2, line 96].

Although increased independence and control was considered to be a positive change when it came to the social elements of secondary school, some children expressed concern about the expectation to be academically independent. Two children shared fears that the expectation for increased independence would mean loss of support from staff in lessons, *"...Here the teacher will go through it with you or the class, but up there you have to do it yourself..."* [Child 1, line 394] and *"...You can't be a baby, you have to do things by yourself in class..."* [Child 5, line 363].

Subtheme 4: Transition as a time for maturity.

Parents and children felt that 'growing up' was a key element of transition. Parents tended to focus on changes associated with puberty, and the impact of hormones on their child during the transition process. Some parents felt that the addition of hormonal changes increased the challenges faced during the transition *"...I know that her hormones are all over the place, so that's more difficult..."* [Parent 1, line 107]

Children on the other hand generally seemed to embrace the idea of puberty and growing up, drawing a distinction between being a child and a 'grown up' as a positive and welcome change. Several children saw transition as a distinct point where maturity occurred, reasoning that, at the point of attending secondary school, *"...We won't feel like little kids anymore..."* [Child 8, line 398] and *"...I really want to grow a moustache so I'll do that when I go to the comp..."* [Child 2, line 84].

Subtheme 5: Resistance to growth

Some parents held the perception that their child was not ready to navigate the increased maturity associated with transition. It was felt that there was too much of a significant change between primary and secondary, *"...It's too much too soon that is.*

Too much of a jump in independence..." [Parent 5, line 127]. Several parents felt that their child did not yet have the resources to cope with increased autonomy and control (subtheme 2) *"... I think he is still, um...like....primary age, you know? He hasn't got the head of a secondary school child yet. Not prepared for how different it will be..."* [Parent 5, line 79].

In addition to parents' reflections on their child's ability to cope with changes during transition, two parents felt that the transition process impacted in the way that they viewed themselves as parents, sharing that it made them feel 'old'. These parents shared that *they* did not feel ready for their child to attend secondary school, *"...It's come really quickly. I'm not ready for it! I'm going to feel like an old mum having **** in (secondary school).,,,"* [Parent 6, line 59]. One parent chose to describe her son in words that limited his maturity *"...Oh, my baby he is going!..."* [Parent 5, line 39]. These parents seemed to be particularly resistant to the idea of their child going to secondary school in comparison to the majority of parents who, despite concerns, viewed transition as an inevitable part of growing up *"...I don't think he is ready really. But it's part of life..."* [Parent 5, line 139].

Interestingly, the subtheme of resistance to growth was not prevalent in the child data set. One child referenced that their parent *"...feels sad because it [transition] makes him feel old..."* [Child 8, line 443], but on the whole, growth as a consequence of transition was seen as a positive outcome.

Theme 2: Information exchange

Information gathering and sharing was a salient feature of the data set. Information exchange regarding transition was seen to serve several functions, by both the child and parent. Six subthemes were captured within this theme.

Subtheme 1: Information sharing as a means to reassure

Information sharing was seen as a way to 'make sense of things' and help prepare for the transition process. Both parents and children constructed information sharing and feedback as a tool of reassurance. Parents generally espoused that their role was to

reassure their child through information exchange “...Normally its talking about her worries and me trying to make her feel better...” [Parent 1, line 46], however it was also noted that this effect was bi-directional and that parents felt reassured by their child sharing positive feelings about transition “....I’ll be alright he says. That’s his words to me. Like a fresh start. I obviously do think he will be alright when he says that...” [Parent 8, line 87]. Parents acknowledged that the level of their child’s concern impacted on how they as parents constructed the transition process, “... He will make me feel less worried, definitely. His positivity can help me...” [Parent 8, line 271) and “...Her worrying less will make me worry less...” [Parent 1, line 213].

Although children shared that they were reassured through information exchange with their parent, none acknowledged their role in reassuring their parent in return. In this sample, children viewed the reassurance as uni-directional with the parent’s role as being reassuring toward their child but not vice versa.

Subtheme 2: information sharing increasing worries

Across the parent data set, participants generally felt that information sharing was a positive way to reduce transition anxieties. Parents were keen to seek out information about how their child felt and were open to sharing their own perceptions about transition. However, a minority of parents also felt that sharing transition concerns would make their child more anxious “....we don’t say it to him because we don’t want him to worry...” [Parent 5, line 124]. In the case of two dyads there was evidence of transmission of anxious cognitions through the verbal exchange from parent to child “...They said they are as worried as I am- how and if I am going to fit in. That makes me more worried...” [Child 1, line 534], and “...They are a little bit worried just in case people pick on me because I have ADHD. They don’t tell me but I have heard them say it to my Nan... so it’s probably going to happen...” [Child 4, line 106]. In the case of one child, a reluctance to talk about transition with their parent was shared because the child felt that they may increase parental concern “...Maybe it’s nice to talk to someone not my mum so I don’t worry her...” [Child 1, line 556].

Subtheme 3: being a 'closed book'

In comparison to subtheme 2, many parents also felt that the lack of information exchange served to increase their concerns about transition. Although all parents felt that they were open to sharing information about transition, many felt that this openness was not reciprocated by their child. A majority of the parents felt that they did not know much about the secondary school, and so their primary source of information was their child. Many parents expressed their frustrations that their child did not share information about how they were feeling, especially when they constructed their parental role as being privy to their child's feelings "*...I'm her mum and need to know what is going on...*" [Parent 1, line 117]. Without knowing how their child felt, parents felt a sense of helplessness in their ability to support their child. In many cases, the lack of information given by the child served to increase parent anxiety about transition "*...He is not opening up to us. It's something I can't put my finger on so I worry about it...*" [Parent 8, line 16]. Several parents described trying to gather verbal information from their child as a difficult process, "*...It took a lot of teasing to get this information from *****" [Parent 1, line 71], and "*...I will try and talk to him but he doesn't say much...*" [Parent 8, line 241]. Consequently, some parents were using different ways to elicit their child views, such as a 'worry book' or by interpreting their non-verbal behaviour.

Subtheme 4: information gained through active experience

Both parents and children cited the value of visiting the secondary as a way of obtaining more information about the impending changes. Parents constructed secondary school visits as a stepping stone for children to get used to the idea of the 'big changes' that were going to happen when they joined the school, by gathering information first-hand through experience. A number of parents felt that the visits to secondary school gave their child an increased sense of excitement for the future, and served to decrease their transition anxiety, "*...I think if he hadn't gone down there, things would have been different and he would have been more worried because he wouldn't have these positive things to look forward to...*" [Parent 8, line 259]

The majority of children felt that the secondary school visit helped to challenge negative constructs that they held about the secondary school. This was particularly evident in challenging pupil expectations of older children and the ability to make friends. *"...I thought everyone would be staring at us because we were new people coming up and the youngest, but I got to meet some of the older people, year 13 and they were alright..."* [Child 8, line 413].

Subtheme 5: Information derived from previous experiences

Parents and children drew upon their previous school experiences to draw inferences on what secondary school would be like. Children reflected on key narratives during their primary education and used it as a way to predict their future in secondary school. One of the most common reflections (n=5) was that incidents of bullying would continue from primary to secondary school. This was the case for 2 children, even when the incident of bullying had not happened for a number of years. Two parents had made their decision on which secondary school their child should attend based on historic experiences of bullying, reasoning that they did not want their child to attend the same school as those who they had previously had negative peer interactions with. Historic incidents of bullying appeared to give foundations for both parent and child to construct that the child was vulnerable for bullying to happen again. One parent shared that the decision to send their child to a particular secondary school was based on historic incidents of bullying, *"... If **** goes to a school with new pupils I think he may be less likely to be bullied than if he is in a school with kids who have had a history of picking on him..."* [Parent 7, line 10]. A number of children made predictions that they would experience bullying in the secondary school based on the pupils who they knew would be attending the same school as them, *"...She came to this school and she was saying nasty things, then she left the school but I know she will be going to the comp so that is worrying me. Probably, like sometimes she will bully me weekly. Depends if I see her walking past..."* [Child 1, line 452].

Two parents also reflected on their own school experience when considering which school to send their child to. Both of these parents had attended the same

comprehensive that their child was due to attend, and held negative constructions about the school, “...I didn’t like it (school). I didn’t like it at all. I didn’t think of the school much then and I still don’t now...” [Parent 8, line 24]. Consequently they had decided to send their children to an alternative provision.

Although the majority of parents and children shared negative experiences as a rationale for their transition concerns, a small number of parents (n=3) reflected on the experience of supporting their older children through transition, “...I have another two children, but they have already gone through the comp and left so I know what to expect a little bit...” [Parent 7, line 75]. These parents felt that they had a better understanding of transition, through experience. Consequently, their concerns were reduced.

Subtheme 6: Urban Myths

A common thread within the child data set was a mistaken sense of fear about secondary, stemming from misconceptions that peers had shared through ‘urban myths’ and anxiety provoking rumours. Several children were anxious about the likelihood of having their ‘head flushed down the toilet’, and sought reassurance from the researcher “...**** says that they flush heads down the toilet there though. Do they?...” [Child 6, line 361]. There was also a common misconception that there would be no support in secondary school and that getting answers wrong would result in punishment, such as being shouted at or detention, “...In the comp they give you detention and red notes if you do your homework wrong. Here the teacher will go through it with you or the class, but up there you have to do it yourself and if it’s wrong them you get into trouble and I don’t like that...” [Child 1, line 189] and “...They give out loads of red cards if you don’t do your work right... ” [Child 5, line 122]. This type of information was commonly shared by peers or older children, and served to paint a negative picture of what the year 6 pupils thought they would experience upon transition. A number of children took information shared by peers as a factual prediction of their transition experience, “...I know exactly what is going to happen. Loads of people have already told me that I am going to get bullied...” [Child 9, line 278]. Some children felt that information provided by older children warranted more credence than information provided by adults. One participant shared that, “...it’s

better that they (older children) tell us rather than adults because they are just like us and they are in school now...."

It was interesting to note that no parent shared concerns about urban myths, or acknowledged that their child held these concerns. Although adults may feel that the rumours spread through urban myths are extravagant enough not to warrant credibility, there appears to be a strong amount of concern reported by children who construct these urban myths as having high validity.

Theme 3: Adaptation

Transition was constructed as a period of significant social, emotional and environmental change. There was a perception that children would need to change alongside their environment in order to successfully navigate the transition process. This process of adaptation was met with both excitement and fear. Children predominately focussed on adaptation on the social level. Some children felt that there would be a significant social discontinuity between primary and secondary school. For some, this offered them an opportunity for social reinvention and a 'fresh start'. Other children perceived this discontinuity as a threat and felt that they could not adapt to a new social structure. The child data set suggested that pupils saw successful adaptation as a way of increasing a sense of belonging in the new school and being accepted. Those children who did not feel that they were able to adapt to the new environment felt that they were likely to be discriminated by their peers and become the victim of bullying.

Subtheme 1: Redefinition and 'fresh start'

An element of new beginning and fresh starts was evident across the whole data set. Some pupils and parents viewed transition as a positive experience to leave any existing problems behind and develop a new identity. For some pupils who had experienced behavioural difficulties at primary the move to secondary school was seen as an opportunity to modify behaviour in an environment which did not already hold negative expectations of the child. Some children reported feeling marginalised in their primary school and they identified transition as an opportunity to increase their worth and value, *"...now (in primary) I'm always in trouble and getting told off, but that is not going*

to happen in the comp. I know I am going to be good..." [Child 9, line 109]. Two children discussed having labels attributed to them, which they were keen to disregard when they went up to secondary, *"...In the comp I want to start like a fresh and I don't want to tell anyone nothing unless I trust them..."* [Child 9, line 19] and *"I don't need to tell anyone about my ADHD..."* [Child 10, line 122]. These children reasoned that, as nobody knew them in the secondary, they have an opportunity to define themselves as the person who they wanted to be rather than being known as a person with an additional need.

Some parents also echoed the possibility of transition as being a fresh start and an opportunity for their child to get away from associations with the past, *"...He just wants to get away from it, so the new school will help him do that..."* [Parent 8, line 125]. Two parent and child dyads had based their school choice on this idea of reinvention, choosing not to go to a school where older siblings had attended. These parents and children were concerned that the schools negative perception of the older sibling would impact on their child's ability to forge a positive identity in school.

Subtheme 2: Blending in- establishing belonging through adaptation

Some pupils did not view the transition process as an opportunity for reinvention, but rather as an opportunity to blend in and assimilate themselves within the new environment with minimal disruption. Those children who wanted to blend in were willing to forgo things that they enjoyed, such as playing games, for the sake of being accepted by the new school community. Several children noted during secondary visits that children did not run around at playtime, *"...If one of the big kids saw us playing tag or whatever, baby games, they would start making fun of us. So we can't do that anymore..."* [Child 5, line 292]. These children appeared to be willing to adapt and modify their behaviour to fit in with the schools expectations, despite sharing their unhappiness at losing out on things they enjoy. Some children expressed their fear of being different would lead to bullying and expressed that 'blending in' was imperative for survival, *"...If you don't blend in you might not have friends or might get bullied..."* [Child 2, line 20]. Other children drew upon their existing strengths as a way to blend in

and find harmonies with the school system. One pupil noted how his strengths in playing sport was a way for him to establish a sense of belonging and value in the secondary school, “...*They played football with me and said I was good and should join the team when I come down. So I’m excited about that...*” [Child 8, line 415]. In comparison, one pupil felt that the discontinuity between primary and secondary school would result in limited opportunities for them to show their strengths “...*I have jobs here so I feel like the school want me here. I like helping people, so I feel a bit sad that I won’t have that job when I go to the comp. I won’t be able to show people that I’m a nice person...*” [Child 9, line 76].

Subtheme 3: Social competence as a barrier or facilitator to adaptation

Social competence was seen by children to be both a facilitator and barrier to adaptation and establishing belonging. All children felt that there would be a social discontinuity between primary and secondary school, and consequently they made appraisals about how they would adapt to new social groups. Most of the children indicated an element of struggle in forming new relationships with teachers and staff. “...*I don’t make friends very easily. Not as easily as other people do...*” [Child 1, line 481] and “...*I’m not very good at making new friends and I’m going to have to when I go up there...*” [Child 2, line 150]. Four children felt that there were internal barriers for them being able to adapt to the social changes in the secondary, constructing that they were not good at making friends. Several of the children shared statements indicating low self-esteem, describing themselves using the words ‘fool’ or ‘weird’, “...*When I try and make friends I always make a fool of myself, but now I’m kind of trying to be more grown up...*” [Child 9, line 46], “...*I’m never popular...everyone thinks I am weird, they tell me so I make a joke out of it, but inside I hurt...*” [Child 9, line 50] and “...*I always worry about making a fool of myself in front of people because of the way I look and dress. I’m not very popular...*” [Child 11, line 124]. Some parents also echoed concerns over their child’s social competence during the transition process, “...*It’s the social aspect for **** which she finds very difficult. She has got friends, but I think she is a bit of a loner because she likes her own company sometimes...*” [Parent 1, line 106] however, there

was significantly less concern shared by parents about social competence as a barrier, compared to children.

Social competence was also seen as a facilitator to positive adaption to the secondary school. In contrast to those children who reported difficulties with developing friendships, a high proportion of pupils felt that their social competence would help them to traverse transition successfully. Many of the children shared positive statements about future friendships and expanding social networks, *"...I can make lots of new friends up there..."* [Child 7, line 137] and *"...I have some friends now there and they have friends so I can make friends with their friends..."* [Child 7, line 155], choosing to use affirmative phrases such as 'I can' and 'I will'. Several the children reflected on their perceived popularity in primary school, with the view that this peer acceptance would continue on to the secondary setting, *"...I'm mostly popular, so I'm not worried..."* [Child 8, line 352] and *"...I'm good at making friends because people like me. They will like me up there..."* [Child 7, line 157].

Many children felt that they could cope with the demands of a new school if they had one good friend with them. This continuation of the social relationships from primary was seen to be a supportive mechanism by both parents, *"...In the beginning he thought it was just him going down to that school, which made him worried but now he knows that one of his best friends is going down so that's good..."* [Parent 7, line 38] and children, *"...As long as I have a friend with me who can walk with me to different classes. A friend from this school who I already know... It will make me feel better if I have my best friend there. I won't be on my own..."* [Child 1, line 475].

Theme 4: Struggling with discontinuity

The theme of struggling with the changes between primary and secondary education was evident in every script, although it was more salient with some participants compared to others. All participants felt that transition would result in discontinuity on a number of levels; such as organisational, social and academic *"...It will just be different. So different..."* [Parent 5, line 58], *"... Big and...just different..."* [Child 5, line 152], *"... Just...everything. New building, new rules and expectations..."* [Parent 7, line

67]. These perceived discontinuities appeared to provoke anxiety in both parents and children.

Subtheme 1: A sense of loss

A sense of impending loss was shared by both parents and children. The time in primary school was generally seen as a positive experience where children had established belonging, developed routine and a sense of safety, and developed key relationships with staff and peers. To many participants the move to secondary school marked a loss of these things, especially relationships with staff and peers. Some parents' shared concerns that the size of the secondary setting meant that their child would lose key relationships that they would be unable to develop in the secondary school, *"...He will be losing that family that he had in primary and I don't think he will get that again because it's so big. I don't think there are those same relationships there. Not because they don't care, but it's just because of the size..."* [Parent 5, line 152]. Interestingly, of those parents who shared concerns about a sense of loss during transition, the focus was solely on the loss of relationships with key adults. Although some children also shared that they would miss adults from the primary setting, *"...I've got a helper in school now who is really important to me. I basically call her mum, she is awesome. She helps me and makes me feel part of the school. I don't know what I'll do without her..."* [Child 9, line 31] the majority of children focussed on loss at the peer level, *"...I'm worried about losing my friends..."* [Child 9, line 124]. Although children shared a sense of loss about leaving friends and teachers behind, they also counterbalanced the loss with a sense of hope for new relationships, *"...I'm looking forward to making new friends, but I'll miss **** loads because he is the year below..."* [Child 2, line 85] and *"...I like having new teachers because they could be lovely, but I will miss the teachers from this school..."* [Child 2, line 101]. During the interview one child tried to balance out his feelings of loss with the new social demands that he anticipated in the secondary school, *"...I wish Mrs *** was coming up with me, but I wouldn't want her coming to lessons with me, 'cos people may think I am a baby or stupid..."* [Child 6, line 387].

2: No longer understanding needs

A subtheme which was prevalent in the parent data was the worry that their child would not be understood in their secondary school. All parents reported that their child's primary school has a good understanding of their child's needs, and consequently were able to support the child through differentiation. This was evident in both social emotional needs and academic needs.

In many instances, this subtheme related to the subtheme of loss. Key relationships were identified as an important factor in primary school, which enabled staff to understand pupils' needs, "*...She knows the teachers really well here and knows that they keep her safe and happy- but that is unknown in the comp...*" [Parent 1, line 46]. Parents shared concerns that the loss of key relationships at primary would result in a loss of understanding of their child's needs, "*...They know his problems are because he had a hard time and they know he is a good boy really so they help him out and are kind, but in the new school it won't be like that. They won't know him and they won't have the time for him that Mr **** does...*" [Parent 9, line 87] and "*...It's a much bigger worry for the comp because she feels that the teachers aren't going to know what has gone on and won't look out for things...*" [Parent 1, line 55].

A high proportion of the parents felt that the move from primary to secondary school would mean that school staff would no longer understand their child's individual needs, and consequently their child would be labelled inappropriately "*...I worry that he will feel the same in secondary school and because they don't know him, they will think he is naughty...*" [Parent 8, line 83] and, "*...The teachers don't know **** well so they are just going to think that he isn't working hard, but he is. He just finds it difficult...*" [Parent 6, line 41]. In addition, some parents worried that their child would not receive the differentiated support that they had in primary, "*...I wish I had got him one (statement of special educational needs) because I don't know if he will have the extra help when he goes to ***** like he does now...*" [Parent 6, line 80].

Two parents expressly shared a lack of hope for their child developing the same key relationships that they had at primary school, due to the organisational differences in

the secondary school “...*They don’t have as much time for the kids, I don’t think. It’s just one lesson to the next so they don’t really get to know them...*” [Parent 6, line 179].

Theme 5: Feelings of hope

Although all participants shared worries regarding transition, there was also a prominent theme of hope. Parents and children expressed that their concerns were accompanied with a sense of ‘everything will be okay in the end’. The majority of participants could think of solutions to their perceived worries. The theme of hope and positive outcomes contained 2 subthemes.

Subtheme 1: Problems are temporary

Every participant shared worries related to transition, however these worries were often compartmentalised to be temporary. Parents felt that their child needed time to settle down, and that the majority of concerns would be resolved after a period of adjustment and familiarising themselves with the new environment. Children also echoed this subtheme with statements suggesting that problems would be transient, such as “...*I’ll get used to it...*” [Child 1, line 463], and “...*things will get better...*”. Statements of concern were often followed up with positive affirmations, “...*I don’t know where classrooms are so I might get lost. I think that will get better though...*” [Child 5, line 424]. These statements may have served as a way for the participants to reassure themselves that a positive outcome was possible, despite worries. Some children were able to reflect on their previous concerns regarding transition, making the assertion that their worries had reduced, “...*I was worried before. Now I’m a bit nervous so less than worried...*” [Child 5, line 434].

Parents also reflected that transition difficulties would be temporary, drawing a distinction between the initial stages of transition and their child’s ability to settle into secondary school in the long term, “...*I don’t think it will take her long to get used to it and settle, I really don’t. It’s just the initial stages...*” [Parent 1, line 161] and “...*I know she will be okay in the long run. It’s just the beginning...*” [Parent 10, line 209].

Subtheme 2: Protective factors

Several protective factors were identified throughout the data set. Parents saw their child as active agents of the transition process, and were able to identify protective factors that could challenge the concerns they had about transition. Parents identified strengths within their child which they felt would help the child successfully navigate transition, “...I know his capabilities and that and I think he’ll be able. Oh he is capable...” [Parent 8, line 98], “...She enjoys learning and wants to learn, so that has helped her to outweigh the negatives...” [Parent 1, line 105] alongside external support networks, such as friendships and supportive school staff “...Like they don’t know **** properly yet, but they are willing to. And willing to help...” [Parent 1, line 311].

Children drew upon perceived internal strengths, “...I’m like a lion...I’m just strong and brave...” [Child 8, line 233] which could lead to adaptive coping approaches and proactive adaptive behaviours. In addition to internal protective factors, children also identified external support systems which could serve as a protective factor during transition, “...with bullying, I know that I can go to other people and my mother will sort it out...” [Child 8, line 233]. The subtheme of ‘protective factors’ drew parallels and connected to the subtheme of ‘social competence as a facilitator’. Children shared that friendships were a crucial factor in helping them navigate transition, and establishing a sense of belonging in the new school.

Discussion

The research aimed to explore parental and child constructions of transition on a number of levels. Using quantitative measures, parent and child transition anxiety was investigated in an attempt to address the following research questions

Is there a difference between anxious and non-anxious parents when reporting measures of transition anxiety?

Results suggested there was a significant difference between anxious parents and non-anxious parents in their own reports of transition anxiety. Parents who had been identified as anxious had a higher level of transition anxiety in comparison to the non-anxious parents. Parental reports of their child’s anxiety were also significantly higher in

anxious parents compared to non-anxious parents. It could be hypothesised that parental trait anxiety impacts on the extent to which parents perceive transition as a threat. Cartwright, Hatton, Abels, Dixon, Holiday & Hills (2013) suggest that parents who are anxious have attentional biases towards threats in their child's environment. Further to this Shortt, Barnett, Dadds & Fox, (2001) suggest that parent and child threat perceptions are correlated and that anxious biases of parents are likely to affect the way that their child perceives ambiguous situations.

Drawing upon this literature, it was expected that the children of anxious parents would have significantly higher transition anxiety than their peers with non-anxious parents. Interestingly, the result from the comparison of children's self-report of transition anxiety in anxious and non-anxious parent dyads did not support this assertion. Results suggested that there was no significant difference between anxious-parents and non-anxious parents on their child's self-report of transition anxiety. This would suggest that having an anxious or non-anxious parent does not make a significant difference on how much transition anxiety their child reports. It may be argued that transition holds a certain degree of worry for all children, regardless of their parent's feelings about transition. Given that all children were recruited from a 'vulnerable' population it may be that they all held similar levels of anxiety to one another and that this level of worry was not mediated by parental anxiety.

There was no significant difference between the parent's proxy rating of their child's anxiety and the child's self-reported transition anxiety in the anxious parent group. However there was a significant difference in the parent's proxy rating of their child's anxiety and the child's self-reported transition anxiety in the non-anxious parent group, with parents reporting their child's anxiety to be significantly lower than it actually was. This result suggests that non-anxious parents are underestimating their child's level of worry about transition. Transition literature supports the assertion that external support networks are pivotal in developing protective factors associated with transition, such as resilience (Akos, 2004). As anxious parents are more attuned to their child's transition anxiety it could be argued that they are in a stronger position to support their child. However this is based on the assumption that these parents have the ability to act as a supportive mechanism during transition. In the qualitative analysis, many

parents reported a sense of helplessness in their ability to support their child, despite being aware of their worries. Some parents reported not wanting to discuss transition with their child for fear of increasing their worries (Theme 2, subtheme 2). Although the non-anxious group did not appear to be as attuned to their child's transition anxiety, this does not automatically disapply their role in developing their child's resilience. Non-anxious parents seeing transition as a low threat may act in a way to regulate their child's anxieties. Despite the quantitative data suggesting that anxious-parents were able to predict their child's level of worry, many parents in the interviews shared that they did not feel they knew what was going on with their child (Theme 2, subtheme 3)

How do parents and children construct the impending transition process?

Although the quantitative stage of the research provided some insight into the transition concerns held by children and their parents, it was felt that the transition process was too complex to be captured solely by a quantitative measure. The interviews and subsequent thematic analysis aimed to explore the views of parents and children on the salient features that they anticipated for the transition process, and to extend the understanding of what concerns parents and children had regarding transition.

The results of the thematic analysis suggested that all parents and children constructed transition as a time for significant change. Transition was constructed in both a positive and negative light, with many citing 'mixed feelings' about the impending changes. The five key themes extracted from the data suggest that there are overlapping constructs between parents and children. However, it is acknowledged that a personal construct is unique and individuals may utilise constructs in personalised ways, even if the language used is the same. It is acknowledged that people may not necessarily use the same construct in the same way, although it may be similar if they have acquired it through similar experiences.

Growth

Transition was seen as an opportunity for growth on several levels. Parents saw transition as an opportunity for positive development in the areas of social competence

and academic achievement through extended opportunities, forced adaptation and their child's renegotiation of their sense of self.

Children also constructed transition as a time for growth, citing new lessons and social changes as an opportunity to develop more mature skills. Children also drew comparisons with their primary and secondary school, sharing that they had 'outgrown their primary'. Feelings of growth supported the idea of 'anxious readiness' (Lucey and Reay, 2000) that children experience. Interestingly, it was felt that parents also showed an element of 'anxious readiness' about their child's maturity and the consequences it would have for both the child and the parent. Many parents felt that transition offered the potential to develop, but some felt that their child did not have the skills yet to traverse the changes associated with transition. It was interesting to note that although independence was seen by children as an opportunity for greater control, many parent remarked that it meant a loss of control for them.

Gathering Information

Kelly (1955) suggests that we seek information as a means of making sense of new and impending situations. Kelly argues that a person's highest endeavour is to 'make sense' of situations and determine how the new information fits in with our existing constructs.

The gathering and exchange of information was constructed in both positive and negative terms. The majority of parents felt that talking transition through with their child was a helpful way to navigate the change process. Information sharing was constructed as a bi-directional way to reassure parent and child. Parents felt that it was their role to support the child through the verbal exchange of information about transition. On reflection, many parents also acknowledged that their child sharing positive information served to reassure them. Information gathering from active experience was also seen as a positive way to navigate transition. The majority of children and parents felt that they had limited information about their secondary school. This ambiguity served to increase anxiety because participants did not feel that they were in control. Transition visits were seen as a valuable way for pupils to gather first-hand information about the secondary school and to start to think about how the

changes were going to affect them. In several cases, the information gathered from experience of visits helped children to challenge or confirm constructs about secondary school, including urban myths. This reinforces the necessity of transition visits as a way to reduce pupil, and parent, anxiety. Some children felt that they needed more than one visit in order to challenge their pre-existing negative constructs about school.

Some parents and children shared impermeable constructs based on past experience, which they felt would not change during the transition process.

Adaptation:

The theme of adaptation was noted by both parents and children, with some seeing adaptation as a positive step to belong in a school. Both children and parents acknowledged that the child would need to adapt and evolve in order to meet the new demands of the secondary school and establish a sense of belonging. Reference was made to the adaptation of core constructs, such as self-identity.

Struggling with discontinuity:

Discontinuities at the organisational, social and academic levels appeared to provoke anxiety in both parents and children. Children mainly reported a sense of loss in terms of 'missing people' whereas parents were more concerned with the discontinuity of support for their child, suggesting that parents were more concerned with organisational discontinuity and children were more concerned about relationship discontinuity.

Feelings of hope:

Despite the presence of anxiety relating to transition, the majority of pupils experience minimal negative consequences of transition, and their anxieties are considerably reduced within the first term of secondary school (Galton et al., 1999; Galton and Morrison., 2000; Strading and McNeil, 2000; and Bloyce and Fredrickson, 2012).

Limitations

The quantitative results relate only to a small sample size of parent and child dyads and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Further research may determine whether similar results are produced in similar or larger sample sizes.

Consideration must be given to the fact that parents who participated in the research were self-selecting in their decision to do so. Choosing to participate in the research may reflect the parent interest in their own and their child's transition anxiety. If this were the case, then some parent contributions may have skewed the findings and provided an overly concerned view of transition. More anxious parents took part in the first stage of the research, and those retained for the second part of the research were predominately identified as anxious. It could be argued that anxious parents felt they had a continued interest in the research, whereas non-anxious parents did not perceive any gains from continued participation. All child participants were recruited from a population identified as 'vulnerable'. Consequently the findings may not be able to be generalised.

Only one parent of each child was asked to participate in the research. For two-parent children, the number of possible parental influences multiplies, and there may be a combination of parental anxiety within any family. However, it could be hypothesised that the adult who reads and responds to letters from school are the most actively involved in her/his child's education.

As the majority of interviews took part in the child's primary school, it could be argued that the participants saw the researcher as part of the school system, and therefore there may have been demand characteristics in which participants felt they had to report positive information regarding education and the school system.

Implications for EP practice

The transition experience is an important turning point of a child's life with anxiety attached, and several elements of change anticipated. The consequences for an unsuccessful transition have been heavily reported in transition literature and there continues to be a national focus on supporting pupils through transition (Noyes, 2006).

EPs can work systemically with schools on providing supportive interventions for pupils during transition. Systems theory (Burden, 1985) suggests that when involved with an individual child, the EP is not simply working with a child, and can gain a better understanding by engaging with the home and school systems. Anderson et al (2000) argue that, in order to facilitate successful systemic transitions, parents should be involved. The information from this study provides an insight into parental views on transition and whether these are related to their child's constructions of transition.

Despite constructing information exchange as an important aspect of transition, the majority of children and parents felt that they had limited information about their secondary school. This ambiguity served to increase anxiety because parents and children did not feel that they had any control. This highlights to EPs the importance of engaging with parents, even if something is presented as a 'school-based issue', such as transition. To facilitate successful transitions, the research suggests that both parents and children would like additional information about secondary school prior to transfer. EPs and educational professionals can help to facilitate this exchange of information and develop transition programmes which promote information sharing on multiple levels.

A pertinent issue for EPs and educational professionals arising from the analysis was the concern of discontinuity. Parents and children who knew that continued provision was in place for their child reported that their anxiety had been significantly reduced. Similarly, children reported that the continuity of friendships in their new form group acted as a protective factor. Professionals can reduce anxiety by addressing these continuation concerns before the child transfers to the secondary provision by sharing information, planning for provision and considering friendships when organising form groups in secondary.

References

- Anderson, L.W., Jacobs, J., Schramm, S. and Splittgerber, F. (2000). School Transitions: Beginning of the End or a New Beginning? *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 325-339.
- Aikins, J., Bierman, K. and Parker, J. (2008). Navigating the Transition to Junior High School: The Influence of Pre-Transition Friendship and Self-System Characteristics. *Social Development*, 14, 42-60.
- Bailey, S. and Baines, E. (2012). The impact of risk and resiliency factors on the adjustment of children after the transition from primary to secondary school. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29, 147-63.
- Bloyce, J., & Frederickson, N. (2012). Intervening to improve the transfer to secondary school. *Educational Psychology in Practice: theory, research and practice in educational psychology*, 28, 1-18.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. London: Sage Publications.
- Crafter, S. and Maunder, R. 2012. Understanding transitions using a sociocultural framework. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29, 10-18.
- Elliott, T, Shewchuk, R, & Richards, J.S. (2001). Family caregiver problem solving abilities and adjustment during the initial year of the caregiving role. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 48, 223-232.
- Evangelou, Taggart, Slyva, Melhuish, Sammons, & Siraj-Blatchford, (2008) What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School? *Research Report DCSF-RR019. Department for Schools and Education*.
- Galton, M., and Willcocks, J. (1983). (Eds.). *Moving from the primary school*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Galton, M., Gray, J., Ruddock, J. (1999). The Impact of School Transitions and Transfers on Pupil Progress and Attainment. *Transitions and Transfers: A Review*.

Galton, M., & Morrison, I. (2000). Concluding comments. Transfer and transition: The next steps. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 443-449.

Galton, M., Morrison, I. and Pell, T. (2000). Transfer and Transition in English Schools: Reviewing the Evidence. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 341-364.

Gillison, F., Standage, M. and Skevington, S. (2008). Changes in Quality of Life and Psychological Need Satisfaction Following the Transition to Secondary School. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 149-162.

Gulati, A. and King, A. (2010). *Supporting Vulnerable Young People in Transition: Addressing Poverty of Wellbeing*. Bristol: The Quartet Community Foundation and Society of Merchant Venturers.

Hammersley, M. (2002) *Educational research, policymaking and practice*. London, Paul Chapman/Sage.

Jindal-Snape, D. and Foggie, J. (2008). A Holistic Approach to Primary-Secondary Transitions. *Improving Schools*, 11, 5-18.

Jindal-Snape, D. and Miller, D.J. (2008). A Challenge of Living? Understanding the Psycho-Social Processes of the Child during Primary-secondary Transition through Resilience and Self-Esteem Theories. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 217-236.

Lohaus, A., C. Elben, J. Ball, and J. Klein-Hessling. 2004. School transition from elementary to secondary school: Changes in psychological adjustment. *Educational Psychology*, 4, 161-73.

Lucey, H. & Reay, D. (2000). Identities in transition: Anxiety and excitement in the move to secondary school. *Oxford Review of Education*, 26, 119-215.

Noyes, A. (2006). School transfer and the diffraction of learning trajectories. *Research Papers in Education*, 21, 43-62.

Rudolph, K., Lambert, S., Clark, A. and Kurlakowsky, K. (2001). Negotiating the transition to middle school: the role of self-regulatory processes. *Child Development*, 72, 929-46.

Rice, F., Fredrickson, N., & Seymour, J. (2011). Assessing Pupil concerns about transition to secondary school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 244-263.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research* (3rd ed.). Padstow, Great Britain: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Shewchuk, R., Richards, J. S., & Elliott, T. (1998). Dynamic processes in health outcomes among caregivers of patients with spinal cord injuries. *Health Psychology*, 17, 125-129.

Sirsch U. (2003). The impending transition from primary to secondary school: Challenge or threat? *International Journal of Behavioural Development*, 27, 385–395.

Spielberger, C. D., Gorsuch, R. L., & Lushene, R. E. (1970). *State-trait anxiety inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologist's Press.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage.

Thomasson, R., Field, L., O'Donnell, C., & Woods, S. (2006). *School Concerns Questionnaire*. Buckinghamshire: Buckinghamshire County Council.

Tobbell, J. (2003). Students' Experiences of the Transition from Primary to Secondary School. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 20 (4), 4-14.

Topping, K. (2011). Primary-Secondary Transition: Differences between Teachers' and Children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14, 268-285.

West, P., Sweetling, H., & Young, R. (2010). Transition matters: Pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the west of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. *Research Papers in Education*, 25, 21-50.

<u>Letter to Parents</u>

[REDACTED]

13th February 2014

Dear Parent,

I am a second year trainee educational psychologist from the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to participate in a piece of research, looking at the transition of children from primary to secondary school.

Under the supervision of Jean Parry, Cardiff University, I would like to conduct semi structured interviews with Children and their Parents who have been identified as eligible for the 'helping hands' project. This is a project which is provided by Bridgend Local Authority to help support pupils during their primary-secondary transition.

The purpose of the interviews would be to collect data exploring parent and child perceptions of transition. Furthermore, I would like to collect additional data through questionnaires which explore anxiety, and anxiety related to transition. I hope that the information from this research will help to understand parent and child transition anxieties, and provide information on how professionals can be support families and young people during school transitions. There is an initial screening letter included with this letter, which explores parental anxiety. All other measures will be collected in one session, through a semi-structured interview and two questionnaires. This session will last approximately an hour and a half.

You and your child's data will be collected and stored anonymously. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely. The participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time up to the point of transcription. At this stage, participants will not be able to withdraw their data as it will be anonymised and the researcher will not be able to identify individual's data. All participants will receive debriefing forms at the end of the interviews.

The data will be gathered between February and July 2014.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this research. Please find enclosed an initial screening tool exploring parental anxiety. If you wish to take part in the research please could you complete the enclosed questionnaire and return the form in the enclosed prepaid envelope. Please let me know if you require further information.

Kind Regards,

Rhiannon Matthews

Rhiannon Matthews
Trainee Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
70 Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
02920875393
Matthewsre1@cardiff.ac.uk

Jean Parry
Research Supervisor DEdPsy Programme
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
70 Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
02920875393
ParryJI@cardiff.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM ANNOYMOUS DATA (PARENT)

School of Psychology, Cardiff University
Consent Form - Anonymous data

I understand that my participation in this project will involve:

- Participating in a semi-structured interview with Rhiannon Matthews (Trainee Educational Psychologist) to discuss my views on my child's transition from primary to secondary school. The semi structured interview will last approximately one hour and will be conducted within my child's primary school (unless specified otherwise). My responses will be audio-taped using a Dictaphone, which will be solely used by the researcher. I will not be identified by name to preserve anonymity. The recorded audio data will be deleted once the researcher has conducted analysis on the data.
- Including three questionnaires:
 1. Questionnaire to explore parental anxiety
 2. Questionnaire to explore my child's anxiety
 3. Questionnaire to explore primary-secondary transition issues

I understand that my child will also be interviewed to discuss their views on school transition. My child will also be invited to complete two questionnaires:

1. Questionnaire to explore anxiety
2. Questionnaire to explore primary-secondary transition issues.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that my child or I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I understand that my child and I are free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with Rhiannon Matthews (the researcher) or Jean Parry (Project Supervisor, Cardiff University).

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the researcher can trace this information back to me individually. I understand that my data will be collected and stored confidentially and will then be anonymised for transcription. After this point the data will not be traced back to me individually. I understand that, at the point of transcription I will not be able to withdraw my data, as it will be unable to trace which data belongs to me due to anonymising. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Rhiannon Mathews, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Jean Parry.

I, _____(NAME) consent for my child to participate in the study conducted by Rhiannon Mathews, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Jean Parry.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I understand that, by taking part in this study, I will be interviewed by Rhiannon Matthews and asked question about my move from primary school to secondary school. The interview will last for approximately an hour, and I will be recorder using a dictaphone.

I will also complete two questionnaires. One of the questionnaires looks at whether I worry about certain things, the other questionnaire will look at how I feel about things in secondary school.

I understand that I can leave the study at any time, if I wish. I do not have to answer all the questions in the interview or questionnaires, and can ask my own questions about the research at any time.

My information will be stored anonymously. This means that it will not have my name on it, and other people will not be able to identify what I have said.

If I have any concerns or questions, I can share these with the researcher at any time. I will be given feedback at the end of the interview.

Thank you for taking part in this research.



Name: _____

Date: _____

<u>DEBRIEFING FORM</u>

Project Title: Parent and child constructions of transition

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this research. The aim of the study is to explore Parent and Child perceptions of the transition between primary and secondary school. This research hopes to explore parent and child constructs relating to transition, and whether parental anxieties related to transition are similar to their child's. I hope that the information from this research will help to understand parent and child transition anxieties, and provide information on how professionals can support families and young people during school transitions. The project also hopes to contribute to the limited research in this area.

All of the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the researcher can trace this information back to me individually. I understand that my data will be collected and stored confidentially and will then be anonymised for transcription. After this point the data will not be traced back to me individually. I understand that, at the point of transcription I will not be able to withdraw my data, as it will be unable to trace which data belongs to me due to anonymising. The raw data will be retained for up to a year confidentially and will then be destroyed. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely.

Should you wish to discuss the study or your participation further please contact Rhiannon Matthews (researcher) or Jean Parry (Research Supervisor).

Researcher

Rhiannon Mathews

Contact Email: matthewsre1@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor

Jean Parry

Contact Email: ParryJl@cardiff.ac.uk

In case of complaints, please contact:

Simon Claridge
Research Director DEdPsy Programme
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
70 Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
02920875393
claridges@cf.ac.uk

Appendix B: Interview schedule

Parent Interview Schedules

How has your child's time in primary school been?

Can you think of some words that you would use to describe the primary school (building, relationships, activities, feelings)?

How do you feel about your child going to secondary school?

How do you think your child is feeling about going to secondary school?

What do you think are going to be the main differences between primary and secondary school, if any?

What do you think are going to be the opportunities for your child in secondary school, if any?

Can you think of some words that you would use to describe secondary school (building, relationships, activities, feelings)?

What do you think are going to be the main challenges for your child in secondary school, if any?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how worried are you about your child starting secondary school?

What are your main worries?

On a scale of 1 to 10 how worried do you think your child is about starting secondary school?

What do you think are their main worries?

How often do you and your child talk about the move to secondary school?

Do you think you and your child share the same thoughts and feelings about going up to secondary school?

What could be done to lessen any worries?

How do you feel after talking about this?

Child Interview Schedules

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you like school now? (Why have you put yourself there? Why have you not put yourself lower? How could you put yourself higher?) {what has your time in primary school been like?}

What do you do at school now?

Can you think of some words that you would use to describe the primary school (building, relationships, activities, feelings)?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy do you feel about going up to secondary school? (Why have you put yourself there? Why have you not put yourself lower? How could you put yourself higher?)

What do you think you will do at secondary school? (what are going to be the differences between primary and secondary school?)

Can you think of some words that you would use to describe secondary school (building, relationships, activities, feelings)?

What are you looking forward to about secondary school? (can you think of any opportunities/ new things that you will get to do in secondary?)

What, if anything, will be difficult about going up to secondary school?

Do you have any worries about going up to secondary school? If so, what are your worries?

What could be done to make your worries less?

What do you think your parent feels about you going to secondary school?

Do you talk to your parent about going up to secondary school?

Do you think your parent has the same thoughts and feelings about you going to secondary school?




Is there anything else about going up to secondary school that you would like to talk about, that I might have missed?

How do you feel after talking about these things?

Appendix C: School Concerns Questionnaire

Making new friends

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10




  

not worried
worried

extremely




Older children

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10




Lots of different teachers

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10

Following a time table

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10

Being bullied

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Getting to school

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Homework

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Dinner times

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



PE

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Changing classrooms

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Being able to do work

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Toilets

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Remembering equipment for school

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



What to do if you are feeling ill

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Lots of people

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Break time

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Size of school

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Losing friends

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
_____10



Detention and discipline

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
____10



1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
____10



1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____
____10



Appendix D: Example Transcripts

Parent Interview

RM: Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. As we have already talked about, this is going to be an interview, should only last about half an hour to 45 minutes, but depends on how much you want to say. Ummm... and its exploring how you feel about **** going up to secondary and how you think **** feels. So we can have a general chat about it, but I do have some questions written down that can sort of um be a...foundation for our talk. So this is recording now. If you want to stop at any time please just let me know and um, if you don't want to answer any question that is totally fine. There is no pressure, and there is no right or wrong answer. Is that ok?

Yeah. I don't know how much I will be able to tell you about how she is feeling. **** is a very deep person, so she often doesn't tell me as her mum how she is feeling. We have a little book in her drawer which she writes in. So I have written some questions to her in there, not just about school but family life, and she has written in there about how she is feeling. I was thinking, I don't know if it's an idea for other children- but I know with ****, she didn't feel confident enough approaching other people, even me as her mum, to talk about worries. whether they could do something like this is schools, like a feelings book so that people like **** can tell others about her worries in a way which she is happy with, otherwise nobody knows what she is worried about and we cannot help her. If we know early on, we can zone in on that really and get some help. They don't always want to say if they are worried in from of other children, but I knew there was something wrong with *****, you do don't you as a mother. Your child doesn't need to tell you. ***** is very hormonal as well at the moment- she is quite forward, grown up kind of thing. You will see when you meet her. So that doesn't help with the worries. But anyway, when I was sitting out there before seeing you, I thought that may be helpful to tell you, and whether the schools could put something where the kids can say how they are really feeling in like a box.

RM: yeah, that sounds like a really good idea. Sometimes it's easier to write our worries down than saying them out loud.

Yeah, I think so.

RM: so, are the worries *** has expressed mainly transition related at the moment or other concerns?

Yeah, mainly transition. she had gone down to the school and I didn't know that she was going down there on that day, um, she had gone down there and she had come back and broke into tears. It was that the room was too big, which is where they had their dinners and she didn't want to pass certain people because there have been issues, I wouldn't say it was bullying, but there have been concerns in the past about other people?

RM: in this school, or in the community?

Yeah in this school. It was dealt with, and it wasn't major bullying, I don't think but she is very sensitive and she gets upset easily when others don't mean to upset her. This thing had happened with two previous girls, it happened a long time ago but always

Lack of information sharing- difficulties in understanding child constructs

Non-verbal means of communicating feeling

Who to share feeling with? Feeling confident expressing worries to others

Early identification and support

Parental instinct to know if something is wrong

Growing up-puberty impacting on anxiety

Information sharing parent to professional

Future orientated worry

Lack of information = lack of preparedness for visit

Emotional preparation- unexpected

Size of school- overwhelming

Previous experiences sharing future expectations

Concerns of bullying

Vulnerability/ low resilience

Previous neg experiences heavily shaping current constructs- threat interpretation and information bias?

stays in the forefront of ****'s mind. It stays fresh. Even though I have asked her whether anything has happened now, 'when you went down there did they say anything?' she says no. But this is forefront for her. This stays a worry for ****, and these girls are going to the same school.

RM: is she worried about it in her current school?

I think it's in her mind, but it's a much bigger worry for the comp because she feels that the teachers aren't going to know what has gone on and won't look out for things. She knows the teachers really well here and knows that they keep her safe and happy- but that is unknown in the comp.

**** is worried about being in big crowds as well. She can't deal with big crowds. She is fearful of walking past teenagers. She doesn't like walking past where the children come off the bus, you know. Teenagers. So its things like that. They are big worries to take on, and they are worried that I feel are going to be worse for *** in secondary because it is so much larger and children have to be more independent. It's a big step.

She is as tall as I am, she wears the same clothes as me. She is a big girl so people think that ***** is older than what she is, but she is not. She is still a little girl. And I worry that being ahead in puberty is going to be difficult for her in secondary school, because people may make comments. You know about how she has developed.

RM: so she has visited the comp once already?

Yeah. When she came back from school that day, she was distraught so I said I was going to phone the school but she says 'no. no' because she thinks she is going to have a row. I said no we have got to deal with it, but because she doesn't know the teachers down there compared to here, she worries about how they are going to react. Told her that we had to deal with it because I didn't want her to be worried into the school holidays, people are there to help you. I phoned the school, which **** was very worried about but they had had her in that morning as I think they could sense something was wrong, so I mentioned how she was feeling and they had organised for her to go down to this nurture room then. But it took a lot of teasing to get this information from ****- I had to get it from the school.

I went down to the school with **** and she is going to be able to use the nurture room which makes both me and **** less worried. She knows where that room is, she is able to go there break times, dinnertimes, and they have an afterschool cooking class. So she knows where this is and what she can do there which is helpful to make her worry less. She doesn't have to go to the other side of the room and walk through big crowds. Those are the times of the day which she will find most hard, and now she knows she can go to a safe quiet space instead. Classes will be fine, but break times and dinner times when there are lots of people around, she will be more vulnerable. Really difficult. But if she knows she doesn't have to leave that area and can go into that room, then she will feel much better.

Concern of bullying strongly pres despite information which challenges this

Comp- lack of understanding pup history/ pupil/ needs

Positive relationships in pri- supp

Safety

Fear of the unknown/ social discontinuity

Specific anxiety- crowds

Worries about older pupils

Higher exposure in comp environment

Acknowledgement of big change

Independence

Growing up- implications for social relationships and expectations

Growing up v being young

'little girl'-parental reluctance for maturity?

Perceived vulnerability

Visit- unexpected

Bad experience during visit

Reluctance for communication between parent and school- uns of teachers in sec

Wanting to reduce worries- proactive

School acknowledging concerns- noticing difficulties

Planning for the future- meeting child's needs- reducing worry

Reluctance to share information

Additional visit- information seek

Planning= reduction of worries/ threat reduced

Understanding child needs and planning provision

Vulnerability

External threats

New social challenges/ new demands

Safety planned

RM: Is this your first child going up to secondary school?

Yes, it's a new experience for me. I can believe how quickly it has gone. Although she looks old, I don't think she is ready. She wanted to go to (secondary school) because her friends are based there. We were thinking about moving house, but I'm not sure, because of her confidence issues, if I would want to put her through another transition. I worry about that. If she has settled, I wouldn't want to move her or put her through the stress or another transition and getting used to another school. I have to pass (secondary school) to get to work though, so could drop her off there and she wouldn't need to get a bus.

She is quite a worrier generally to be honest. The heights thing- she won't even drive down the bay because of the barrage. She won't even go in the car near the bay, even if we don't go to the barrage. She won't go on the train to London because she knows it goes under the water. She is claustrophobic. There is lots of worries there. I'm not sure where they came from, but they all build up.

RM: Yes, I can imagine they would. How has ***** time in primary school been generally?

No... no it's been a bit turbulent for her since she started. We had the mental health team in for her at one point because she had said to her friends that she was going to hang herself from the tree in the garden. This is when she was only year one, so from quite early on she has been troubled and has had a lot of worries. So it's been up and down. I think on the whole she has enjoyed school because she is quite academic, very academic actually, she likes learning. She enjoys learning and wants to learn, so that has helped her to outweigh the negatives. It's the social aspect for **** which she finds very difficult. She has got friends, but I think she is a bit of a loner because she likes her own company sometimes. I think it has been quite turbulent her school experience- it has been happy times and not so happy times.

RM: and how do you think she is feeling about Primary school at present?

She is ok at the moment. I know that her hormones are all over the place, as I said she is a very well developed and larger girl which I think she has concerns about. I have concerns about it. The transition has been a big deal but I think we have sorted a few of the worries now, especially with access to the nurture room. She has started to feel a little bit more comfortable talking to me. Why she doesn't feel comfortable in the first place...I think it's because she is embarrassed. She doesn't like me going into the bathroom, but I need to you know. I'm her mum and need to know what is going on. She is getting a little bit better though and I feel she is happier now she knows there is a place for her in school, otherwise she wouldn't belong anywhere and would be stressed out in the large areas of the school. She seems to be settled into the idea of the comp now, more than before.

RM: that's good. So I wonder what has changed to make her feel more settled into the idea of going up to secondary?

Just the safety of knowing there is a safe place for her to go. It makes her worry less, and me worry less about those big fears she has. Like crowds and older kids.

New experience for parent

Growing up quickly

Social continuity

Too many changes at once?
Multiple transitions- perception
unable to cope

Strategies to avoid anxiety
provoking situations/ reduction
stress

General worry- internal= const
about child coping and resilience

General anxiety? Not just
transition- vulnerability

Vulnerability

Additional support

Extended worries not relating to
transition

Mixed experience

Enjoying learning- a protective
factor- outweighing worries.

Social competence/ loneliness

'turbulent' school experience

Hormones- growing up/ change
Hormones interacting with
environmental changes. Body
development affecting how others
perceive her.

Addressing worries pre-transition

Barriers to information sharing
embarrassment

Parent seeing role as needing to
know what is happening- control

Belongingness

Adjustment- getting used to idea
of change

Safety

Information given-reassuring

Reassurance for parent

Strategies to avoid anxious thinking

RM: so, at the moment how do you think ***** is feeling about going to secondary school?

She is nervous. Yeah, scared. She is scared about walking past crowds, past teenagers. Which she doesn't realise she is going to be one of. But it is walking past people she is very fearful of. If I put 6 or 10 children on a corner, she would find that very difficult to walk past. It's probably the fear of teasing I should imagine. I don't think it's that they are older...if she had to walk past 6 or 7 adults, she would be fine. It's just the fear of what they are thinking about her or what they may say. It's not necessarily the crowd, it's who makes up that crowd and the consequences ***** thinks is going to happen. I might be wrong.

RM; as a parent, what do you think will be main difference between primary and secondary school?

Again, it's the crowds and how large it is down there. I don't think she will be long to settle in, it's just going to be a bumpy start and I worry that there could be a disruption to her schooling because she is very academic and I think that is the driving force for her going to school, and I don't want that to change. But I'm reassured that there is help there, and I've just got to key it into her that she can use that help to settle in. That's the big thing for her, it just the size of it. It's like the logistics of all the other pupils moving around the school. And the pupils coming from all other areas to attend the school- here it is just, sort of top end of this community so we know each other and the school better. But it's a much bigger net in the comp- it's the unexpected and not such a community feel. You have got people from further afield so it's the mix of pupils, and the unfamiliarity as well as the size.

RM: Does she know any pupils attending the comp already?

She knows quite a lot. She knows a y12 and a lot of others that she does know which I think is a positive thing for her, but she doesn't see that at the moment. She is too wrapped up in worried to think about the positive things already there. She is too focussed on the negative to see the positive. We have tried to outweigh it, like draw a table with the list of negatives, then put the positives to moving to the comp but she doesn't see it. She can't process that at the moment. I do think it will be better once she is down there, after a period of time to settle in and get used to the school. there was a picture on the wall of the nurture room and I said to ***, 'that's you that it' and it was a person who looked like they had manic concern in the drawing, and in the picture next to that someone had thrown a bucket of water over them and it was just calm. And I said to her, you get all manic and you can't see things straight. You need to calm down and have some perspective, you know. It don't think it will take her long to get used to it and settle, I really don't. It's just the initial stages. With support from the school, I think she will be settled in about a month. It might be longer I don't know. But given that she has friends down there, and she knows other people, I don't think it will be long. Knowing other people is a safety net.

RM: Yeah, that's a nice way to put it "safety net". So it sounds to me that you can think of positive things for *** going down there. What do you think are going to be the opportunities for **** in the comp?

New environmental demands

Not seeing herself as a teenager- drawing distinct growing up

Fear of social judgement- holding construct about teenagers and anticipation negative outcomes

Large compared to primary

Adjustment period- things get worse before they get better

Worries about academic disruption and consequences for engagement

Reassured by support- use tool to adjust

Community and belongingness in primary- knowing each other v lack community feel in comp due to size

Homogeneity of pupil population; changes in social structure

Anxiety/fear- unknowing

Existing relationships at secondary- parent seeing as protective factor but not considering differences in primary and secondary appraisal of parent and child

Seeing transition as negative

Strategies to reframe

'wait and see'- experiencing will be better than predicted. Negative predictions, need experience to challenge them

High anxiety- parental feedback- consequences?

Adaptation stage- settling down

Safety through social continuity/ ties- safety net

New opportunities

Academic opportunities

Social development opportunities

I don't know really. I think more opportunities to learn skills like the cooking. That extra additional support and after school activities will be good for ****. She doesn't go out very often, so after school cubs will be a good way for her to socialise outside of the classroom. She likes to stay in and do some writing, cooking so those extra activities in school with other pupils will help her to build friendships. It will be more social. She has no problems academically, it's the social side and the confidence which she needs to build on.

RM: and do you think that the comp will be an opportunity to develop those things?

Yeah, I think so. It will almost be forced upon her in some ways. But it will be a good thing.

RM: what do you mean by forced upon?

Like...she will have to make new friends and take part in new activities. Maybe stuff that she wouldn't normally think to do, but will actually be good for her. In school now it's a bit of a routine, a bubble, but that will change and she will have to make changes with it when she goes up.

RM: I understand that. So, I know you have already spoken about this but can you think of any additional challenges that *** may face going up to (secondary school)?

Well, nothing more than what I have said. Mainly the crowds and the amount of people

RM: If I give you a pen, then...On this scale of 1 to 10 then, how worried are *you* about **** starting secondary school? Just put a mark on the line.

I would put it as an 8, because of the things I have already said. And we have said bullying- she is prone to that so I worry about that. I'm really worried about her changing classrooms, because I think that is where bullying will come in. She can be a grumpy mare though and can moan about children so I try and turn it around but you have got to be careful because she might actually be being bullied, but I think a lot of it is ****'s perception and her being sensitive. She argues all the time with her sister. I said to her, the way you are with your sister, when (sister name) reacts to you and you make her cry, do you continue to do it- yeah. I said why you continue to do it; because you are happy that she is sad. I do try and say to her about how she reacts to other people and how it's the same. Sometimes when you are horrible to people, you can be perceived as a bully to, even though you don't mean to bully others. She does understand that now. She didn't before.

RM: So, if I summarise, you let me know if I haven't got it right though- you have put yourself as an 8 because of the concerns over the size of the school and the amount of people and the way that **** has a particular worry about these things. And also because of maybe a history of bullying and how *** interprets ummm... maybe some interactions with her peers?

Yeah, that's right

RM: so, I wonder...as you didn't put the line all the way at the top, what factors stopped you from going higher?

Developing social skills- confidence and friends

'forced' to develop soc because of new social demands, challenges, available opportunities

change of routine and structure as a good thing rupture as a positive

Forced adaptation and evolving alongside chan

Prior experiences shap future expectations

Vulnerability- perceptio bullying- victimisation

Development of cognit impacting on social interactions

Everything will be okay the end- seeing concer a short term thing

Hope and positivity for future

Cos I know she will be okay in the long run. It's just the beginning. At now we know she can go to that room that is a big relief.

RM: and is there anything that could be done to move you down the scale?

I think it's just about waiting to see, and me being able to talk to **** about how she is feeling so she worries less. Her worrying less will make me worry less. I don't think anything else can be done extra that hasn't already been done. Me ringing the school and going down with ***** on that day was a big help. I was only there an hour, but for her to know where that room is and that she can access it will be a big help in lessening her worries. I can remember their names, but I'm sure that if I rang the school and asked to speak to the transition later or *****'s form tutor, which we find out next week, they would speak to me and help if **** was in a state.

RM: okay. So I'd like you to do the same thing again, but this time, instead of how worried you are, I would like you to think about how worried you think *** is. Sorry- here is the pen.

10 plus, definitely more worried. And she isn't going to overcome that until she goes there on that day. There worries are going to fester over the holidays, and I'm the only one who can support her then. We have done everything we can and until you suck it and see then we don't know what is going to happen. Sometimes the build-up is worse than the actual thing- we get even more worried and 6 weeks holiday is a long time for that worry to build. I think these 6 weeks will be challenging. At first, not so much but the closer it gets to when she is going then the more stressed she will get. I am going to be taking her to school, she isn't going to get the bus- I won't even put her in that situation. She couldn't cope with that. She would be a mess going out of the house with the thought of getting on that bus. I told her she was lucky because when I was in school you just got your uniform got on the bus and off you go. There never used to be things in place for transition when I was in school.

RM: (laughs) yes, some things are different in schools now. Did you enjoy your time in school?

Yeah, I did. But looking back I would say that- you don't have all the stress of being an adult (laughs). I didn't like sports. Neither does ****. She does do cycling and walking but now she is a bit older she just doesn't like sporting activities, she is just not that way inclined.

RM: is there anything that could be done to move *** down the scale, do you think?

Definitely this nurture room. What else can be done, it don't know. Maybe **** can suggest some stuff but we won't know until she gets down there.

RM: how often do you discuss transition with *****?

A lot, we have talked about it a lot recently. Normally its talking about her worried and me trying to make her feel better. I came in last night and I had been for a walk with headphones on and the Jessie J song sexy lady was on, but the words in there are good like 'don't be afraid, don't let them put you down' so I played that to her and I was singing to her and telling her to think of this song and she was laughing into the pillow...so at least we can talk about it in a fun way. **** doesn't always come to me

Wait and see

Wanting reassurance from child

Information sharing as positive- making school aware of needs and pre planning support

Continued communication planned- reassuring to both parent and child

Child higher worries anticipated

Worries a barrier until experienced changes

Isolated support over the holidays- parent as only source of reassurance

Increased worry the closer the threat gets

Coping resources- avoiding anxiety stimuli

Parent experiences contrasting

Parent experiences

Shared dislikes

Planned provision

Nurture

Wait and see

Reassurance parent to child

Happiness/ lighthearted

Parent extracting information 'push her'

with concerns or voice her worries, it's up to me to approach her and bring it up...I've got to push her. Like I said when she was miserable and took photos from up in the attic when she was 3/4 and always smiling. I put them on her dresser and said to her '****, look at that smiley girl. Where has that girl gone, because when you smile you are beautiful? You light up. Not that you are not beautiful anyway, but your smiles have gone. You are 11, you don't need to be carrying the world on your shoulders.' So you know, she has started coming to me more, but she does find it better to write in that book. she is getting better at sharing her concerns but through the medium of that book- definitely better at communicating difficult things through writing rather than speaking to me about it. I mean I am a bit like that because I would rather text or do an email if I want to speak to someone about something that is upsetting me. I can do face to face when it comes to emotional stuff, so maybe she gets that from me, because I worry that people's responses are going to be negative.

RM: I am exactly the same way as well to be honest. Much happier writing things down.

Yeah, definitely.

RM: are you ok for time? I only have two more questions.

Yeah, that's fine

RM: I was wondering if you could think of a word that you think would best describe primary school. It doesn't just have to be just one word, but how would you describe primary school?

Errrr.... (long pause). Ummmm... like how what I would say or what **** would say?

RM: what you would say- a word that you would use to describe primary school

Ok. Ummm... well I would say comfortable? Yeah. Comfortable and like, supportive.

RM: okay. Could you tell me a little bit more about why you have chosen the words comfortable and supportive?

Well, it is comfortable. I suppose in lots of ways. For *** and for me. She has been here for years and we are used to the staff and the kids and even the parents, and they are used to ****. They know in school what her triggers are and how best to help her. It's comfortable for *** in the sense that it's a small space, so she doesn't get anxious... it safe for her here. As long as she doesn't feel she is being bullied. But the teachers and head are good at dealing with that if it does happen. I suppose we have all just gotten into a routine over the years and that's comfortable, so that's what makes going up to the big school harder because it breaks that comfort, that we, well **** has been used to for a long time.

RM: and what about the word supportive?

Just the same really- because they know **** and she knows them, the school are good at helping her when she feels upset or worried. I think she would be able to tell someone here if she felt really bad, but she doesn't have that relationship with anyone yet in the comp. I'm not saying they wouldn't be supportive. It's just, without knowing **** they may not know how to. And she may not tell them, because that relationship isn't there. So it a bit of a stuck situation. If I hadn't rung the school, she may have gone

Non verbal ways to share concerns

Alternative communication

Shared preference for communication

Worries about responses feedback from others

Routine, comfort, supportive- opposite to change.

Comfortable for both parent and child- used to it. Belonging. Knowing what expect-falling in line with constructs

Knowing pupils needs- supportive environment

Rupture- break of comfort and apprehension over discontinuity

Knowing pupil

Trusting relationships- need to develop new in comp

Fear of unknown- social relationships and support

Circular problem- not knowing needs

Acknowledgement that school perceptive

under the radar a bit because she is a well behaved girl and does well. Although, they did notice when she went down that she was worried.

RM: yes, that's good that they picked it up without *** having to expressly say it. And it sounds like accessing the nurture room is going to be helpful for ****. So can I ask you to do the same again and think of a word, or a few words to describe secondary school? From your point of view, again.

Yeah, okay. It's harder because I don't really know the school. Apart from talking to them on the phone, that's all I've had really. Thinking of primary school is easier.

RM: well there is no right or wrong answer

Yeah. Well from what I know they seem nice and ummm....accommodating. They seemed to want to do things to help **** and reassure her before she even started, so that is reassuring to me too. It's something that will be helpful over the summer- **** knowing that this is available to her.

RM: so, by accommodating do you mean they are willing to put things in place to support ****?

Yeah. And willing to talk to me on the phone about **** and listen to what her worries were. That was helpful.

RM: is that being accommodating important?

Yeah definitely. It makes us feel better. And the school just seems supportive because of it. Like they don't know **** properly yet, but they are willing to. And willing to help.

RM: are there any other words that you would like to add?

I think, I dunno it's just going to be a change. A big change. I would say it's going to be fast paced if that makes sense?

RM: yeah, I think so. Would you like to expand a little bit more so I make sure I understand? What way will it be fast paced?

Like it will be busier. So much more people, so much more work, so many more teachers. It's going to be a steep learning curve in a small space of time. Just fast paced compared to now. There is going to be a lot to take in when she starts. But she will get used to it hopefully.

RM: thank you- that's the last of my questions. Is there anything else that you would like to say that maybe we didn't get the opportunity to discuss already?

I would love to know where **** would put herself and what she would say. It would be quite interesting to know. We need to support them as well, so it would be good to know how we can do that and the more information the better.

RM: do you think you and **** will share the same thoughts and feelings about going up to the comp?

Probably, yeah. I think I know a lot about what she is worried about so I have a pretty good idea. It's not to say that I am necessarily worried about those things- but having

Difficult to think of words for secondary because of lack of experience and knowledge

Experience- nice and accommodating- planning provision

Reassuring

Resource for coping over summer

Open communication

Open to get to know pupil- reassuring

Big change- fast paced- anticipation of a lot of change at once- overwhelming

New demands; peers, teachers, environment, academic, social

Control- being done to you

Lots of change at once

Information seeking

Information as a means to support

Child worry increasing parent worry

Parent does not share same concerns, but is worried about child's feelings and resources for coping

feedback

her worry makes me worry. So I'm not worried about the individual things- more just concerned about her and how she is feeling. It would be nice to know if she did have the same things as I said- you can't really help unless you know what the problems are.

Child Interview

RM: okay ****, the tape recorder is running now. Are you happy to start?

Yeah

RM: lovely. Well, like I explained a minute ago, I would like to have a chat with you about school; the school you are in now and the school which you will be going to after the summer. And if you are happy, maybe we could talk about how you feel about going up to the secondary school. . Just to be really clear, if you want to stop at any time at all please just say...I won't mind. And if you don't want to answer any questions you don't have to either. Is that ok?

Yeah, that's ok

RM: ok, thank you. I've got the recorder on...I'm just going to use this so I remember what we said. I've got a bad memory and I want to remember what you tell me. So what I will do is listen to the tape, write everything down and then delete the recording so nobody else will hear it. I won't put your name on the stuff I write either, so people won't know it's what you have said. Is that ok?

Trust
Sharing information

Yeah. I don't like people knowing stuff about me unless I tell them. I tell my sister things and she tells other people and it upsets me.

RM: ah, ok. I can see why that would upset you. I won't tell anyone that what we have talked about is what you said, unless it's something that is going to um... put you in harm or others in harm, but I'd talk to you first if I was going to do that. But I am going to use the information that we talk about for my work. so I'll be writing a um research report, which might have little quotes of what you have said, but it won't have your name or anything, and I'll make sure there will be nothing that anyone will be able to figure out it is you. Does that sound ok?

Trust

Yeah, that's fine. I just don't like it when my sister says stuff to people and they say things.

RM: Okay. Well I've got some questions here which we can go through, but if there is something else you want to say then go ahead. I might not have thought of everything. Because we are going to be talking about how you feel, there are no such thing as wrong answers. Okay.

Yeah

RM: well, maybe we could start off by talking about your time in primary school. I have got this line here from one to ten and if it's okay could you mark where on the line you would be if I asked you how happy you were in primary school. So one is not happy at all and 10 is really happy.

Positive primary

RM: cool, so why have you put yourself there?

I just, sometimes I don't like some of the people in the class and other times it's because I'm not that fussed on maths. I don't seem to do as good in maths as other things.

RM: okay. So is that why you didn't put yourself all the way at the top?

Nods

RM: can you think of any positive things that made you put that mark on the scale?

I've got loads of friends in class and the fact that I love English, and that's the only place I can read in peace and get my head stuck in a book

RM: What's your favourite book or author?

What's his name...JR Toilkken? We are reading some of that in class. The hobbit. But I am reading lord of the rings, fellowship of the rings at home. I like David Walliams too...I'm waiting for him to publish a new book. I've read all of them.

RM: I keep meaning to read his book. The boy in the dress, it looks good. So how do you think you could go up higher to a ten? What could be done to move up?

I could learn all my times tables and perhaps be more patient with other people in the class because they annoy me easily.

RM: why do they annoy you?

I don't know because I had a hamster before and they made fun of his name, Theo and they make fun of the fact I have a chameleon. There is one boy who comes into my class, ***, and he calls my chameleon a colour changing freak and I don't like it.

RM: ah, I think a chameleon is a pretty cool pet! It's unusual. Good unusual

Yeah. I like him.

RM: what do you do at school now?

Like stuff like work?

RM: anything. What do you enjoy to do and what do you do on a daily basis?

We go out on the yard we have got a thing for chasing the boys around and catching them. It's really fun and sometimes then we just wander round talking. It's fun in class now really as well because this week we have come to the end. The end of the year we do more things and get ourselves ready for leaving.

RM: I saw you were doing lovely pictures in there for your end of year assembly. And the PowerPoint. Are you doing anything in the assembly?

Yeah we are going to be singing a song doing showing a few PowerPoints and we are going to be reading our speeches we have wrote. It will be good, but sad at the same time.

RM: why will it be good and sad at the same time?

Social interactions-relationships with peers

Perception of weaknesses

Belongingness/ peer relationships

Enjoyment of subjects

School as an environment do things child enjoys

Solution focussed- development of academic skills and social skills

Prior experiences- feeling victimised

Fun

End of year winding down fun activities coming to the end

Preparing for leaving

Mixed feelings sad and good for leavers assembly

Positive to make occasion saying goodbye

Sense of loss

Wishing to stay in current school- resisting change

Because we have worked hard and it will be nice to say goodbye properly, but I am going to be sad because we are leaving people here and I wish I could stay.

RM: so, still thinking about primary school, I'd like you to try and think of a word, or a couple of words that you think describe your school.

Ummm....it's quiet and I can spend my time reading if I want.

RM: okay, I'll put the words quiet down and a place for reading. Is that ok? Anything else you want to put?

I don't know. It's like. We have been here for a long time so I'm just used to it. It's like another home really.

RM: in what way is it like another home?

Because I learn here, and have fun here, and eat here and I also have bad times here with people annoying me. It's good and bad.

RM: okay, so shall I put the words home, learn, fun, eating, good and bad times down?

Yeah, that's right.

RM: I'd like us to have a think about secondary school now. Is it *** you are going to?

Yeah.

RM: cool. Well I'd like us to do the same thing with the line again, but this time I want you to mark down how happy you feel about going up to secondary school. So 1 is not happy at all and 10 is really happy.

I'm a two.

RM: okay. Would you mind telling me a little bit about why you are a two?

Umm...it's about the crowds and the size of the place. I went down a few weeks ago and we were eating dinner in the hall and it's too big and it's so crowded with people rushing about.

RM: I see. So is it the actual size of the space, or the amount of people in the space?

The people in the space. It worries me. It's a lot bigger then here.

RM: would you mind sharing with me what worries you about the bigger amount of people. You don't have to unless you want to though.

It's ok. I just don't like big crowds, like about ten. Not people younger than me, but my age and older.

RM: why are older people in crowds something that worry you?

Like not adults but older kids. I'm worried they will say something if I walk past. Older kids think its okay to be horrible to younger kids because they think that they won't tell. I worry about what clothes I wear. Recently my mother bought me these jeans things but I can't wear them because of the colour. I think people will laugh at me. They are like a really dark dark green colour. I feel nervous being around crowds because I think they will look at me and find something mean to say. When I was younger there was this girl

Quiet

Used to school-routine.

Another home-comfort, safe, routine know what to expect

Different to pri

Contrasting with pri small and quiet.

Experience of visit shaping future expectation- falling line with anxieties about crowds

Fear of social judgement

Low self esteem

Prior experiences

Young

in the next class up from me and she used to bully me. I didn't have a dog, so I used to just take one of my toy cuddly dogs out for a walk up the mountain and back. And her and her gang came up to me, took my toy dog and went to chuck her over the river. So I think older kids, if there are lots of them, can be mean and will be horrible to me. And the fact that there is a girl who is pretty nasty going up. I'm not sure if I'll see her much but she is pretty nasty.

RM: do you know her from outside of school?

She came to this school and she was saying nasty things, then she left the school but I know she will be going to the comp so that is worrying me. Probably, like sometimes she will bully me weekly. Depends if I see her walking past.

RM: I wonder how that can be made better for you when you go to the comp. Can you think of anything?

I don't know I just...I seem to avoid crowds and if there is a big crowd I go the other way. And ummm, well they have got this thing down there called the nurture room that I visited a few weeks back and all it is is you go in there with your worries and you can eat dinner in there if you don't feel like eating in the big hall. I liked going there. It was small and I felt safe.

RM: so do you think you will use that quite a lot in the secondary school?

Yeah, I think so. Until I get used to it down there.

RM: so your scale for primary and your scale for secondary are quite different. Is that mainly because of the crowds and older children?

Yeah

RM: are there any other differences between your school now and the comp? It can be good differences or bad differences.

We don't do woodwork here and I'm really looking forward to that. And, I'm not much of a fashion person but um...the fact you can make your own dress in the sewing class when you are a bit older...that's really exciting for me.

RM: ooh. I'd love to be able to make my own dresses. I'd save a fortune! That will be exciting for you. Is there anything else that you are looking forward to?

Going to different classes- you don't have to stay in one. I don't mind it as long as I have a friend with me who can walk with me to different classes. A friend from this school who I already know. I'm happy. I like going to different classrooms though, because you are not sitting in the same place all day looking at the same things and um...down the school there is a science classroom, I don't know if I will be in it yet, but it's got loads of skulls in it. It's pretty gore but looks interesting. I'd like to see those. I just don't want to walk into class late, because people will turn around and look at me and I don't like that. If we have to move classrooms all the time that might happen.

RM: are any of your friends going up to the comp with you?

Older kids in group mean

Worries about existing relationships

Predicting negative future

Avoiding anxiety stimulus

Provision planned- compartmentalised worries

Small and safe- parallels to primary continuity

Get used to it- period of adjustment- this will get better

Opportunities for more lessons and development of skills

Changes to learning exciting, but need support to go from class to class

Friends as a supportive mechanism

New experiences

Not wanting to be noticed- blending in

Social continuity

Missing information

There are only two girls **** and **** but **** is my best friend so I feel really happy about that. I don't know yet until next week if we will be together in the same tutor group. I want to be though.

RM: why would you want to be in the same tutor group?

Just, because I think it will make me feel better if I have my best friend there. I won't be on my own. I don't know. I don't make friends very easily. Not as easily as other people do. It's just because other people know lots of people from other schools but I like to keep myself to myself. I need to get to know people slowly and let them get to know me rather than just saying, do you want to be friends. But that will be more difficult in the comp because everyone will be making friends quickly and I can't do that.

RM: what are looking forward to most?

The sewing definitely, and umm...I don't think there is anything else. Oh, yeah the e3.

RM: what's the e3?

It's where you go out and do different things like horse-riding. I like that they have got a big library, but it's frightening for me because when you go in all these, two big book marks....well they are not book marks...you know when you go to the shop and they have got those big security things by the door. They got some of them and I get a bit stiff when I walk through them. I'm afraid they are going to beep and they will come over to us. They don't have those in our library here. I think they trust us here, but not in the comp. I don't like it when they do that because it makes me feel like I have done something wrong when I haven't.

RM; oh, okay

I'm excited about getting my new bag and all my equipment as well. Mum says I can get a super dry bag which is going to be really good!

RM: that sounds good.

Yeah, I couldn't have one this year, but I'm allowed one now I go to the comp.

RM: why are you allowed one when you go to the comp?

Just because I'm older, and mum says it's a treat so I can be ready to go up.

RM: like we did before with your school now can you think of a word or a couple of words to describe the comp?

Big, crowded, older children. I'm a bit worried that the teachers down there will be really shouty.

RM: why do you feel that way?

Because I've been told that they are. They give out loads of red cards if you don't do your work right. Like, I'm not worried about homework. I don't like getting anything wrong because the teacher might call you over and say, why you have got this simple question wrong. And in the comp they give you detention and red notes if you do your homework wrong. Here the teacher will go through it with you or the class, but up there

Fear of loneliness

Continuity of friends

Perceptions of social competence and adjustment

Perception of other peoples social competence of her o

Being 'left behind'

New opportunities

Building on strengths

Trust- school not trusting pupils

Worries of discipline, doing sometime wro

Differences in regulations and scho ethos resulting in no feeling trusted (value Good?) compares wi primary construct

Excitement- new thin

Being prepared

Allowing things not previously allowed

Older

Incentives

Negative constructs

Information shared- negative

Discipline model

Anxiety over getting into trouble- differen form primary

Urban myths

Primary=supportive/ondary= independent and discipline for fail

Perceptions of staff= supportive v shouty

you have to do it yourself and if it's wrong then you get into trouble and I don't like that.

RM: do you know what ***, all your teacher here say that you are a lovely girl who works so hard. I don't think that you will be getting lots of red notes when you go to the comp. And if you don't understand the work you can ask the teacher- they won't shout at you for asking to explain it. You can ask friends as well.

Yeah... cos like I was worried about the timetable but I did ask a girl who was at the school but now in the comp to show me her timetable and that made me feel better because I knew how to work it out and it won't be something else new I need to learn when I go up because I have already seen it.

RM; that's good. So is it helpful to know things before you go up?

Yeah, definitely. Otherwise I'll be worried about it over the summer

RM: how do your mum and dad feel about you going up?

They said they are as worried as I am

RM: ok, what have they said they are worried about?

How and if I am going to fit in.

Mare those your words, or their words?

That's their words, that's what they say to me. If I am going to just stay as I normally am. Don't go out to play as much as I used to...they are worried I will do that and not make friends.

RM: so do you talk about it quite a lot?

No, I just...recently my mother put this thing on the bed and it's a worry book and she just made a questionnaire for me to write out about stuff.

RM: was that easier?

Yeah, easier than talking. I use it quite a lot, so I can let her know how I feel.

RM: is there anything that can be done to make your worries less?

I think just spending more time by myself. So I don't need to get worried. And when I read books I get ideas on how to sort out my worries, so I can do that. And with bullying, I know that I can go to other people and my mother will sort it out, but still it's not nice if people call you names. It makes me feel horrible even if it's sorted out. I think there will be more of that in the comp because of the older children. I'll just tell adults and avoid those people.

RM: it's a good idea to tell people if you feel you are being bullied, ****. You are right, it's not nice when people call others names. That's why it's important to make sure you tell teachers. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

No, I don't think so.

Information shared f
peers already
experienced transiti
reassuring

One less thing to wor
about

Worry over summer

Shared concerns

Shared concerns- soc
adjustment and
belonging

Transferred anxious
cognitions through v
exchange? Or reinfor
existing anxious
cognitions

Non-verbal sharing o
information

Having time to get us
to idea of change

Information seeking

Older children= more
bullying

Not wanting to worry
parents

RM: well thank you *****. I really appreciate you sharing those things with me. How do you feel?

I feel ok. Maybe it's nice to talk to someone not my mum so I don't worry her.

RM: well I've loved talking to you. You seem like a very nice girl. I'm sure you will do really well in the comp.

Thanks.

Parent Interview

RM: thanks for taking the time to do this. I've set the recorder on now, but like I said, if you want to stop at any point or don't want to answer any questions please feel free to stop and just say. I won't mind at all. If you are happy to start, I'd like to know how you feel ***'s primary school experience has been?

*** had a difficult time with bullying. . **** has already had to move primary school once. He was in **** but I moved him out of there and brought him up here. He was being bullied, he was so I didn't want him to go to a secondary where the same pupils who bullied him before we going to be. Those children are going to be that much older, so they will be that much stronger and I worry about them hurting **** and the bullying stepping up a level. If **** goes to a school with new pupils I think he may be less likely to be bullied than if he is in a school with kids who have had a history of picking on him. Like if he didn't want to go here then I wouldn't have made him, but it did take a bit of convincing more or less from me (laugh). He was bullied when he was in year 3 about to go into year 4 when I moved him to this school and I don't want the same things to happen again.

He loves coming here. When he was in the other school he would never want to get up in the morning, he would never want to go in. And he was always saying "how many days until a day of?" but we don't have that anymore. Not at all. Oh yeah, much better. Even if he gets up late, he never ever says to me I don't want to go to school. So a big improvement. Much different. And I think he had learning difficulties down there. we pulled out that he wasn't reading properly and when we went up to see them they couldn't see that, but obviously I knew and my husband is a teaching assistant see, in a naughty school so he brought home a test for him to do and we could tell. So we come up here then and it was a different head, wasn't it? So he went into there and he is much better. Much, much better.

RM: and if you had to choose a word to describe primary school, what word would you choose?

I don't know. It's nice, he likes this one. They are good and they have looked after him.

RM: how do you feel about him going up to secondary?

Yeah, I feel fine. It's got to happen hasn't it.

RM: and how do you think *** feels about going up to the comp?

He is really excited. He have told me "mam I loved going down there, I can't wait to go down there" so that's good.

RM: did he share what he is excited about in particular?

No, I think he just generally is, and I think he knows know...in the beginning he thought it was just him going down to that school, which made him worried but now he knows that one of his best friends is going down so that's good. And they are in the same tutor group. So he won't have to go by himself. There are 8 or

Bullying- prior experience- anticipated/ future orientated worry based on social relationships

External threats

Construct of things being worse with older children

Based on previous experience

Parental influence on school choice- own worries impacting on child outcome

Previous disengagement

Perceived vulnerability

Perceived additional needs

School's understanding of needs

Meeting needs

Positive primary experience

Nurturing/ looking after

inevitability

information sharing- positive future

readiness

peer support/ social continuity reassuring

nine of them going to the new school. My other two children went to *** and I really didn't want him to go down there. I think it's just gone downhill and isn't the right place for him

RM: so what do you think are going to be the main differences between the primary and secondary school?

What will be.....? Hmmm...I don't know. Being independent with money for a start, isn't it? (Laughs) I haven't got the control (laughs). You have to drum it into him- you have only got this much, you can spend this much. That's going to be hard I think.

RM: Can you think of any new opportunities that he may have when he goes up?

Well....to grow up I think and learn more, hopefully. He used to be really shy, but now he is older he is coming out a lot now. He is not as shy. The transformation is starting now.

RM: what do you mean by transformation?

Well, just growing older and having more grown up ways.

RM: and what about challenges of going up to the comp? Can you think of any of those?

Getting up in the morning to go (laughs). His lessons I think he might struggle with, I think he will. It will be harder, I think. Homework. I think that will be more, so he will have to get used to that. He doesn't like homework. And the work...I think he lacks concentration, you see.

RM: like I asked you to choose a word for primary school, I wonder if you could give me a word to describe secondary school.

I don't know. It's new and grown up, I guess.

RM: what do you mean by new?

Just..everything. new building, new rules and expectations. Maybe a new start

RM: I've got a scale here, of 1 to 10 which I'd would like you to mark how worried you are about *** going to secondary. 1 is not worried at all and 10 is extremely worried, so you can put yourself anywhere on the line.

About a 5 I am. I'm in between. I'm worried that he will be okay, that he will get on and that he will like it and still want to go to school. Keep liking it, like he does now

RM: could you tell me a little about why you put yourself there?

I have another two children, but they have already gone through the comp and left so I know what to expect a little bit. You still worry though, even though it's my third. I still worry about him going up to the comp. They are all so different, oh yeah.

Previous experience- negative/ older children- informing parental construct

Meeting needs

Independence

Responsibility

Loss of control felt by parent

Developing skills through parents- challenges

Growth and maturity

Academic growth

Social growth

Transformation at time of transition

Growth/ maturity

Expectation of harder work and child's ability to meet new demands

'get used to that' - able to adapt

Internal factors vulnerability to adapt to new demands

New

Maturity

Different demands- contrast form primary

New start

Mixed feelings

Hope for continuation of school connectedness- worry about disengagement because of change

Previous experience informing construct- older children

Reassurance form having gone through experience- constructs formed and expectations set.no fear/anxiety because have readily available constructs about transition

Acknowledgement of each child being different- different experiences

RM: and why didn't you put yourself higher?

I would normally be worried about him being bullied... but down there...I know they have it in every school, but down there I think they are good with it. I don't know why...I think they are though, see.

RM: is there anything you could do to make yourself go lower?

No, not really. Just see how it goes like. He is really happy at the moment.

RM: same activity again, but I'd like you to do it for how you think *** feels? Where would he put himself on the line?

Oh he is not worried at all. A one. Not worried at all.

RM: so you think he would be less than you?

Oh yes. Definitely. He is just excited about going up. He doesn't think about the things that might be the things a parent would worry about. He is just ready to go.

RM: do you and *** talk about transition at all?

Oh, I try to but like I said I can't get nothing out of him. I do try. He went for a visit last Thursday so I could talk to him a little bit about things but not much. He doesn't tell me about worries. He never said. He might not say nothing now until a week before he goes down. That's what he is like. He holds it in until the last minute.

RM: and last question... thank you for bearing with me...do you think that you and *** share the same sort of feelings about transition?

Yeah, I think so. I don't know, see because he doesn't say really. Some of these things I don't talk to him about so it's difficult to rate them. The thing is with ****, he is awfully deep. But he won't tell me a lot either so I don't know what is going on a lot of the time. It's awful hard to get things out of him. I worry about him going to the big school but I don't know if he feels the same. He is really...my girls would tell me everything, ***** sigh...no he is really hard. The only time we talk about school is from here to the house. Can't get nothing, no.

Conflicting constructs- provide reassurance

Solution to worries

Perception of school support

Sense of inevitability

See how it goes

No worries

Acknowledgement of differing levels of worry- role of parent v child

Excitement

Readiness

Information exchange- parent to child not child to parent

Impending change- worries

'Reality hits'

Information exchange- hard to rate child feelings

Perception of emotional depth, but not shared verbally

Parent concern not reassured due to lack of information exchange

Child interview

RM: we are going to have a chat about school- a little bit about where you are now, and about where you are going up to secondary school. I'd like you to have

a little think about the school you are in now. And what I'd like you to do is try and think of a word that describes your primary school. You can give me a couple of words if you like.

Its good, but it's a bit too small for me now.

RM: that's interesting. Why do you think it's too small for you now?

Just because I'm getting to be a grown up and we have been the oldest in the school for a long time now, so it's time for us to go up.

RM: I wonder on this line of 1 to 10, how much do you like school now? So 1 is not at all and 10 is loads.

3 out of 10 liking school now.

RM: ok. Could you tell me why you have put yourself there?

Like doing work with miss now, but I don't like doing some of the hard work.

RM: okay, what kind of work is that?

Science. No, English and topic. I like playing games outside at break more. Dinnertime is my favourite because it's the longest break we have and I get to play with friends.

RM: okay so I want you to have a little think now about your secondary school. I'd like you to think of some words to describe your secondary school. I know you haven't started there yet, but think about your visit, and think about how you felt.

It's like a big W.

RM: the shape of it?

Yeah

RM: cool. Can you think of any other words that come into your head when you think about the comp?

Um...new friends.

RM: ok, what makes you think of that?

Just because I can make lots of new friends up there.

RM: and what about this line again. Where would you say you were out of 10 if I asked you about going up to secondary school?

10 or 9.

RM: why have you put yourself there?

When, because about the school leavers party and all that, we will be upset because we have to leave the school and teachers and some of our friends. We will all miss the teachers and friends going down (alternative school). I dunno how to feel better about that. But my best friend is going to the same

Positive primary word

Too small

Maturity

Time spent in school- social maturity

Inevitability

Readiness

Enjoyment of work

Support

Hard work- not enjoyed

Social enjoyment

Free time

Structural description

New- social growth

Opportunities for social growth

Positive cf/ primary

Mixed feelings

Sense of loss

Social discontinuity and continuity- best friend (kev

school as me ****. We are in different kind of things. He is in (house name) and I am in (house name) but we get the same break

RM: how do you feel about being in a different group?

Not that bad, because we get the same breaks and playti- um, dinnertimes.

RM so what do you think you will do that will be different at secondary school?

At playtime we get to have snacks which is a good thing. Now when I am hungry I can't just have a snack, but up there I can. Work might be a bit easier, because when we went down it was a bit easier.

RM: What are you looking forward to about secondary school?

Seeing my friend who are already down there. I have some friends now there and they have friends so I can make friends with their friends. if I like, if I'm like have no-one to play with I can find them. I'm not worried about making friends. It will be good because there will be lots of new people. I know some of the teachers, so that better. Mrs *** lives by me so it's okay because if I be with her in class its ok cos I won't be that scared about doing welsh.

Break time and lunchtime will be good because when we went down to see the school we were there until two and we had break and lunch and it was good. It was fun.

RM: was it helpful to see the school before?

Yeah it was good. We all tried looking for each other to meet up and stick together and we looked around the school to explore together. It's like a massive W.

RM: What, if anything, will be difficult about going up to secondary school?

Figure out where the bus stop picks me up. If not my mum may have to take me nearly every day and I don't want her to. I want to get the bus now I am going to the comp. timetables- I'm not that good with timetables, I've not used it before so I need to practice a bit. Sometimes I worry about remembering things to take to school, but only a little worry so it's ok. My mum will help me.

I'm not worried about being bullied though.

RM: how do you think your mum feels about you going to secondary school?

Good. She says I'm being a grown up boy now I'm going up

RM: Do you talk to your mum about going up to secondary school?

Sometimes. She says I'm doing really good down here and that it will be really fun to go there and make new friends.

RM: Do you think your mum has the same thoughts and feelings about you going to secondary school?

Yeah, we are both happy

Independence

Control

Visit experience- reassuring/ helping to form expectations- realistic?

Existing peer relations

Opportunities for Social expansion

Perceived competence to make friends

Knowing people as reassurance peers and staff

Visit experience- reassuring

Fun

Visit experience

Strength in numbers

Visualisation of building

Logistical information seeking

Seeking independence- compared seen as being 'grown up'

Anxiety- new experiences. No experience to help form expectation... perception of negative internal capabilities to meet new challenges

Independence vs relying on parents

Positive parent feelings

Information exchange

Maturity associated with transition

Positive information shared by parent- echoed in child constructions

Shared positive feelings

RM: Is there anything else about going up to secondary school that you would like to talk about, that I might have missed?

No



Part C: Reflective Summary

Introduction

The reflective summary aims to discuss the research journey in terms of contribution to knowledge and a critical account by the research practitioner. This reflective summary will be written in first person in an attempt to share with the reader the personal research journey which I made, whilst balancing the role of being both an applied psychologist and a researcher.

The contribution of knowledge recognises how my own beliefs and personal experiences influenced the piece of research. The decisions made throughout the research journey are reflectively considered and the impact that this process has had on knowledge is discussed.

Background

This paper is based on research conducted as part of the DEdPsy professional training course. The research explored parent and child constructions of the primary- secondary school transition and had a particular focus on transition anxiety experienced by both parents and their child. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to address my research questions. Quantitative methods were used to investigate transition anxiety for parent and child and drew distinctions between parents with high trait anxiety and those with no/low trait anxiety. The qualitative element of the research took a broader approach in order to explore parent and child constructions relating to the primary to secondary transition. The aim of utilising a mixed methods approach was to gain a rich and detailed insight into multiple perspectives of transition. Hammersley (2002) lends support that a combination of qualitative and quantitative can generate a more comprehensive picture, while providing complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Johnson and Turner, 2003).

Contribution to knowledge

In order to consider the impact of the knowledge produced from this piece of research, it was felt that the process as a whole should be analysed and reflected upon, so that my underlying

beliefs and assumptions are identified and the influence of these beliefs and assumptions on the research process are acknowledged. Mertens (2009) argues that a researcher's belief system can determine the direction of the research enquiry, and establish the research paradigms chosen by the researcher. In addition to belief systems impacting on the direction and construction of research, belief systems can also influence the way in which research is executed, examined and reported. Mertens (2009) furthers this by arguing that the researchers underlying belief system and assumptions influence the way that researchers contribute knowledge to research literature. The value of this knowledge will not only depend on the belief system of the researcher, but also of that of the reader. It was therefore considered important that my belief systems and underlying assumptions were made as transparent as possible, through reflective and reflexive thoughts on the research journey.

Development of the research

Initial motivations and the development of a research idea

The initial development of the research was influenced by distinctive factors on both a personal and professional level. From an early point in the doctorate I had found myself particularly interested in anxiety. I felt that a high proportion of my cases on professional placement raised concerns of child anxiety regarding school. I also noted that the Local Authorities I was placed in were very much at full capacity for pupils who were unable to attend mainstream education due to anxiety related difficulties. I had a number of cases which involved emotion-based school refusers (EBSR), and was part of a multi-agency Vulnerable Children Panel within a Local Authority which considered alternative placement for EBRS. I initially wanted to do a piece of research with this population of pupils, exploring the anxieties which they associated with school and their perceptions of interventions to reduce anxiety (such as mindfulness). I informally discussed the feasibility of this research with a Local Authority, however after reflection it was felt that this may not be appropriate. There were

concerns that there would be a low participation rate as many of the pupils would be reluctant to engage in a piece of research. Although I wanted to explore anxiety, I was very mindful of the ethical implications of conducting research with a group who had already disengaged from mainstream education due to anxiety. I had reservations as to whether the Ethics Committee would give ethical approval to a piece of research which could potentially exacerbate anxious feelings in a population which was already considered to be very vulnerable. Many of these pupils were involved with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and so I had to give serious consideration as to what the impact of potentially raising anxious cognitions would be and how this may have a bearing on interventions involving other professionals.

One piece of anecdotal evidence that was shared by colleagues and experienced personally was that children who had anxiety related to school often had a parent who shared similar anxious cognitions. In many consultations I was struck by my observations that a great deal of my work was focussed on addressing parental anxiety about school. Staff at alternative provisions for EBSR often shared their constructions that parents were a large contributing factor to the construction and maintenance of anxieties, possibly co-creating anxieties relating to school with their child. My initial desire to research child anxiety related to school evolved to thinking about the relationship between parent and child anxiety. On further reading, I found that there was a significant amount of literature on parent and child anxiety in the fields of cognitive psychology and clinical medicine, however there was little research in the fields of education and educational psychology. At one stage I reflected that my personal interest in anxiety would be a barrier to adopting, and retaining, a research practitioner role. However, after further exploration it became apparent that that personal reason and experience were valid reasons to begin research in a particular area (Lowe, 2007). I was mindful to reflect on my own assumptions and beliefs on the process by using COMOIRA as a guide to reflect on the research process.

This broad interest of parent and child anxiety was focussed further after I became involved in the planning of a transition project to support children who were considered to be vulnerable. Transition was considered to be a period of substantial change for the majority of pupils, which often results in some form of anxiety (Topping, 2011). Furthermore, it was acknowledged that there was a significant group of vulnerable pupils who experienced considerable enough transition anxiety to warrant enhanced transition support (Hodson, Baddely, Laycock, & Williams, 2005). I found it interesting that transition was identified as a time where disengagement from formal education begins, for a significant minority (Sutherland, Yee and McNess, 2010). Reflecting on my experiences with EBSR pupils, it was noted that the majority of this population had started to disengage from education during year 7, with a high proportion of pupils having started to access alternative provision during year 7 or 8.

I wanted to bring together my interests in parent and child anxiety with transition (figure 2). As a practitioner I strongly believe in the importance of early intervention, and I felt that exploring anxiety during the transition process may yield interesting information about how to support young people before they become disengaged from education.

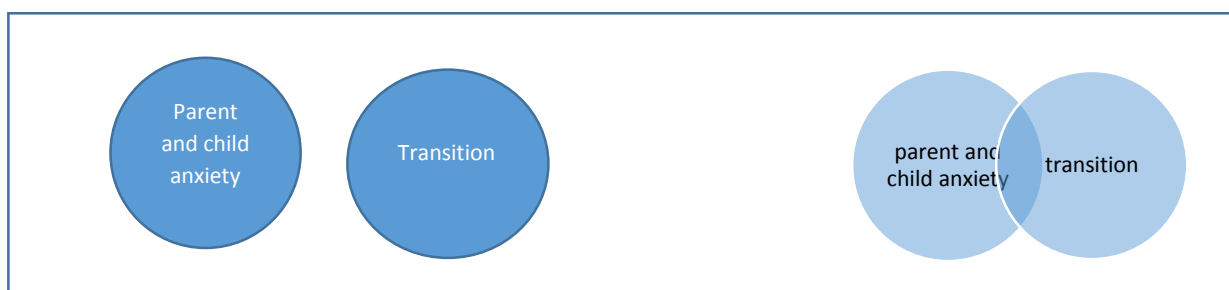
Summary of the gaps identified within the major literature review

The literature review was a critical part of the research journey, especially in the early stages of identifying a research gap. There was already a significant amount of research relating to the primary to secondary transition, however it was felt that there were identifiable gaps in the literature. The links between parent and child anxiety had not been explored in a real world situation relating to transition (figure 1). Although some transition research has gathered parental views on the transition process, such as Jindall- Snape and Miller (2008) there has been no research to date that explores parental constructs about transition anxiety in comparison to their child. Research into transition showed that intervention practices are widely adopted in schools in the United Kingdom to support children during transition, but

that these interventions tend to focus on the level of the child. The literature acknowledgement that parental factors can play a role in successful transition, however this research predominately focused on the relationship and communication between the parent and school, as opposed to considering the interactions between parent and child.

figure 1: existing research

figure 2: hopes of current research



The literature review was an incredibly challenging process. I initially found it difficult to synthesise the large amount of research papers on related subjects. Given that many of the research papers regarding parent and child anxiety were in medical journals, based on research with clinical populations, I often found myself going off on a tangent and trying to access medical journals, of which the articles generally ended up being of little relevance. Several times I had to refocus myself and reflect on clearer search strategies. Despite this challenge, the literature review was invaluable in identifying a gap in research and consequently formulating my research questions.

Contribution of Results

The results from the study both served to support existing literature on transition, as well as providing some interesting insights into parent and child constructs of transition. I found that the children were incredibly insightful in terms of their perceptions of the challenges and opportunities that transition may bring, and how they felt that they could overcome these

challenges. Given the ambiguity that many participants felt about the impending change, they were able to think of solutions to many of their worries through solution focussed questioning.

According to Charmaz (1995) young people are holders of information and can control what they choose to share or hide. As a researcher, I feel that I respected that young people too can exert power and control over what they share (Harden, 2000) and consequently did not try and extract any information that they were not willing to give. I was incredibly grateful for the detail that the participants were willing to share with me, especially as some of the information was of a sensitive nature. I feel that the personal details in each person's narrative have made the data set rich and layered, and provided a wonderful insight into why they had constructed certain elements of transition as being anxiety provoking. Many of the child interviews had an undercurrent of nervous excitement about them, which made the interviews very enjoyable to be a part of. By the end of many of the interviews I felt a sense of excitement and hope for the child.

The results yielded some unexpected findings, namely that there was no difference between the anxiety levels of children who have anxious parents and non-anxious parents. I had anticipated that children with anxious parents would have higher transition anxiety than children who had non-anxious parents. I think this assumption met my own constructions that I had formed through experiences on placement. I strongly felt that parental anxiety would impact on child anxiety, and held the assumption that a relaxed parent would result in a relaxed child. The result has given me an opportunity to reflect on my own constructions about both transition and the role of the parent in constructing anxious cognitions. Inferences can be drawn that transition is a worrying time for all pupils, not just those whom I may have previously identified as being vulnerable due to parental factors.

Contribution to educational psychology knowledge and the relevance to EP practice

Government policy has emphasised the important role that EPs have in supporting schools to develop and deliver interventions which support the emotional well-being of young people (Department for Education, 2013b). Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) note that intervention is becoming an increasingly core aspect of EP work. The research suggests that transition is a pivotal change in young people's lives where concerns about discontinuity is prominent in both child and adult populations. It highlights that transition needs to be managed and planned for, by creating opportunities for dialogue, first-hand learning experiences, and continuation of social and organisational provisions (where possible).

The research highlights that both parents and children were anxious about the discontinuities that transition brought. They cited continuation of relationships and provision as protective factors to help them navigate transition successfully. By providing an element of continuation, professionals can help children and their parents to develop an 'arena of comfort'. Simmons and Blythe (1987) conceptualise the 'Arena of Comfort' as a way of understanding the nature of life experiences. They hypothesise that individuals cope better with significant change if there is some arena of comfort in their lives. Simmons and Blythe (1987) argue that, if comfort (such as environmental, relationships or self-esteem) exists in some areas of a person's life then they are better equipped to tolerate discomfort in another area of their life. The arena of comfort can serve to give a person a sense of control in a situation which might be perceived to be out of their control. Call and Mortimer (2001) suggest that the arena of comfort provides a safe haven for individuals. In order to minimise transition anxiety, educational professionals need to consider how arenas of comfort can be built in to the systemic change of transition. An example of this would be to utilise sociometric methods to identify valuable peer relationships for children, and consider these relationship when planning the organisational element of transition (such as tutor groups).

Several of the participants reported that transition visits were a valuable means to gather information about the secondary school system, through first-hand experience. Although most secondary schools organise transition visits, the research yields interesting information about how the content of these visits could be adapted to maximise information exchange. Several of the child participants felt that their worries and negative constructs were best challenged by information exchange from older pupils who had already navigated transition, rather than the adults in their lives. When considering transition visits, educational professionals may wish to consider the role of older pupils in giving information about the school rather than transition events being led by school staff. A number of pupils cited that opportunities for them to socially integrate with older children during transition visits helped to dispel urban myths, and foster the early stages of a sense of belonging. Educational professionals can provide valuable opportunities for positive peer interactions, such as peer mentoring systems and co-operative learning opportunities. Although many interventions in secondary school involve peers as a means of support (such as peer mentoring), these initiatives are generally offered when pupils have already started secondary school. By facilitating peer support in the pre-transition stages, pupils may start to develop a foundation for belonging and establish a sense of community within the secondary school. In line with the modern age, Morrison (2000) and Johnstone (2001) suggest that the use of modern technology, such as social networking sites, email and blogs/vlogs, can enable young people with pre-transition opportunities to connect with their perspective peers. This would be an exciting way of promoting peer interactions pre-transition. However, it must be noted that there are possible ethical issues with using technology methods to scaffold peer interactions, and staff would need to be mindful that it is used appropriately.

The research supported that developing a sense of belonging was an important protective factor for children during transition. The research literature supports this assertion by suggesting that a sense of belonging in young people is linked to gains in self-esteem, positive

attitude and reduction in feelings of anger (Midgely & Maehr, 1998). Educational professionals need to scaffold opportunities for young people to develop a sense of belonging before they transfer to secondary, rather than waiting for them to join the secondary.

The research highlighted that children and parents predominately regarded transition as a one-way process, where children had to 'fit in' to the secondary environment by learning about, and becoming accustomed to the school system. This resulted in anxieties about those who felt that they were not ready for these adaptations, or were at risk of conflicting with the system as they were not able to fit into the 'box' which secondary school provision had forged for them. EPs may have a pivotal role in reframing with secondary systems that effective transition is accomplished by considering a two-way process. The child needs to adapt to the secondary environment, but equally the school may need to adapt to the child in order to meet their individual needs. It is important to note, however, that discomfort associated with significant change processes can be positive in terms of development and learning for life. Simmon's and Blythe's (1997) assert that all change demands some levels of discomfort if a person is to develop appropriate coping skills that will make them more resilient in the face of future potentially stressful life scenarios. The challenge for schools, parents and children therefore is balancing the management of children's transition anxieties with providing opportunities for growth and coping skills, through an element of discomfort.

Contribution to knowledge of the research practitioner

The knowledge acquired by both the research findings and the research process has impacted on my applied work by giving me a greater understanding of the constructs of parents and children when faced with change processes, alongside my understanding of the concept of vulnerability. Although the research focussed on school transition, I feel that my understanding of the impact of significant change processes on children and their families has developed. It is hoped that this understanding will be evident in my applied work. With the

new Educational and Health and Social Care Plans being implemented in the UK there will be an extension for EPs to work with young people through additional transitions, such as leaving school to go to higher education or employment. Given that this transition also results in significant change for the young person, it may be argued that anxiety will be present. I feel that this research has helped to shape my thinking around transition and change processes, which can be extended to support the evolving role of the EP.

By completing this research, I feel that I have been given an excellent opportunity to really reflect on young people and their experiences of transition. In particular, I feel that the research has provided me with a platform to develop my understanding of transition, especially the anxieties associated with the transition process and 'vulnerable' children. In line with the constructivist paradigm which I tend to adopt in my professional practice, I feel that it is important to reflect on my choice of language throughout the literature review and subsequent research, especially the term 'vulnerable'. Upon reflection, I don't think that vulnerable is a just term to describe the children who took part in this piece of research.

The term vulnerable is prominent in the existing literature relating to transition, often used to describe pupils who meet risk factors identified in social science research. However, there is no single definition of what constitutes a 'vulnerable' child or young person. The definition of vulnerable, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2011) is to be "exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally". The DfES consider groups of children belonging to the following groups to be vulnerable; looked-after children, children with complex medical needs, gypsy/traveller children, asylum seekers and refugees, young carers, school refusers, teenage parents and young offenders (DfES, 2003). Within the transition literature, pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, pupils who are 'socially vulnerable', children who are considered to be 'at risk', pupils with special educational

needs (SEN), pupils from low socio-economic status backgrounds and pupils from minority ethnic groups have all been considered to be 'vulnerable'.

It is important to note that all of the vulnerability criteria has been constructed by adults; researchers or policy makers. Although the children who took part in this research met the criteria constructed by the Local Authority to be considered 'vulnerable', I would argue that labelling them as vulnerable does not reflect their ability to discuss their concerns about transition, often adopting their own solution focussed approach to think about how they could experience positive outcomes. In fact, I think that the term 'vulnerable' is actually quite disempowering to this group. I've found it useful to consider the perspectives on children in research outlined by Christensen and Prout (2002) as a way to reflect on how the term vulnerable influenced the way that I explored children's views about transition. Although I structured the research with the child as a social actor, by acknowledging that each child has their own experiences and understandings, capable of interacting meaningfully to bring about change, I do wonder if the level of each child's engagement with the research was contained by my own judgements about the abilities of children who were considered 'vulnerable'. After conducting the research with a group of children who were so capable of speaking for themselves and sharing honest and valid information about their situation, I feel that it would be really interesting to undertake a piece of research around transition where children/ young people are not only participants, but co-researchers. In fact, I think this experience has helped me to really consider how I can address the power imbalances that seem to exist to favour the researcher rather than the participant (Russell and Kelly, 2002) and even the adult over the child.

Dissemination of knowledge

In addition to contributing to the doctoral award, it is hoped that the research paper can be shared through an academic journal. I am looking forward to receiving constructive feedback on the research so that I can ensure its suitability for publication.

Critical account of the research practitioner

Epistemological position as a professional practitioner

I found it challenging to determine my research design, in particular my epistemological position. If I had been asked, I would have automatically responded that I worked within a constructivist paradigm. Without reflection I would have assumed that my work as a practitioner was heavily embedded within constructivist foundations. However, throughout the research process I came to understand that it was not this straightforward. In my practice as an applied psychologist I often find that I utilise both qualitative and quantitative measures in my daily work. Although I do value the quantitative information which is obtained from quantitative approaches and measures, I feel that it is difficult to view the information in isolation. In professional practice I generally strive to capture 'the big picture', by incorporating and supplementing quantitative data with qualitative data. This is where I felt that a constructionist base underpinned my professional practice. On reflection however, I do not think that I am guided by one sole epistemological basis of practice. In daily professional practice I sometimes make decisions which are social constructionist in approach, and sometimes technical-rationalist. Often I use both. Consequently my practice as a professional sometimes involves using qualitative methodologies, sometimes quantitative and sometimes both.

Epistemological position as research practitioner

My professional position has been echoed in my research, where I have embraced both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This research was therefore guided by a pragmatic paradigm, allowing freedom to link theory to method in “different ways deemed appropriate” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998. P.30). By employing a mixed methods design, the epistemology of the research drew upon elements of both post positivism and constructivism.

There is a resistance from some members of the research community for using mixed methods approaches. The ‘quantitative –qualitative incompatibility thesis’ (Robson, 2011) suggests that it is not possible to use qualitative and quantitative methods together as the methodologies are associated with two distinct paradigms. However, Howe (1988) refutes this thesis, arguing that the combining of quantitative and qualitative methods is a positive step for researchers as ‘there are important senses in which qualitative and quantitative methods are inseparable’ (p.10). Using a multi-strategy design can help to produce a more comprehensive picture of the topic of research, which Bryman (2006a) descriptively refers to as ‘putting meat on the bones’, and can help to answer different research questions (Robson, 2011). Willig (2001) suggests that there are ‘no right or wrong’ methods per se, but rather that methods of data collection and analysis can be ‘more or less appropriate to the research question’ (p.19).

Methodological decisions

A quantitative approach was used to answer the first four research questions which were concerned with the differences between anxious and non-anxious parent child dyads when reporting transition anxiety. I felt that it would be more appropriate to use quantitative data to investigate whether parents and their children had similar levels of transition anxiety. By using a quantitative method I hoped to establish an observable pattern between parent and child transition anxiety. Rice, Fredrickson and Seymour (2011) argued that there are limited empirically derived research findings regarding transition, and that reliable quantitative

measures of transition anxiety would be useful in providing practical information to educational professionals. Further to this, it is argued that clear empirical findings have the scope to refine the content and delivery of interventions (Vitaro and Tremblay, 2008). The majority of UK research has utilised qualitative methods to explore transition concerns. I felt that utilising a qualitative approach to explore child anxiety would add to a limited research base. Furthermore, exploring parent transition anxiety would provide a new perspective on a largely qualitative area. Of the limited research which has explored parental views of transition, qualitative data methods have been solely used. Although I felt this positivist approach would yield interesting information, I was concerned that, in isolation, the data could be construed as quite superficial. By drawing on my own professional practice I reflected that I find quantitative information most valuable when contextualised with qualitative data.

The research would have been enhanced if more non-anxious parents had been retained for the second part of the study, so that there could have been more continuity between the first phase and second phase of research. I had initially planned to use the qualitative data to help build and contextualise the data to compare anxious and non-anxious parent dyads.

Unfortunately, only two of the non-anxious parents were retained for the qualitative part of the research and it was felt that inferences and themes could not be drawn to the point of saturation with such a small sample of non-anxious parents. Instead, the qualitative data was analysed as a whole and comparisons drawn between parents and children, rather than the two parent groups. The lack of non-anxious parent retention is acknowledged as a limitation of the research.

The qualitative approach was used to obtain richer data on parent and child constructions relating to transition, as it was felt that quantitative measures would not illustrate the personal insights and constructs held by parents and children regarding transition. I wanted a methodological approach which could give participants a flexible platform to share their

constructed 'realities' in order to address research question 5. I felt that using semi-structured interviews would enable me to capture the participant's beliefs and constructions about transition. I developed a semi-structured interview schedule, consisting of 14 questions. The questions were open-ended to ensure that the interview was participant led, and were designed to produce depth and richness of data, as recommended by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2007). I used my literature review to develop the questions, whilst considering how best to elicit responses which would help answer my research questions. I felt that having interviews which are more participant led would provide the opportunity to capture a rich set of data. I felt that any information shared would have relevance to my data set- there could be not 'right' or 'wrong' constructions, only individuals' objective 'realities'. Smith and Osborn (2003) argue that a participant led interview can reduce the control which the researcher holds; the interview may take a long period of time and contain information which is not considered to be relevant (Breakell, 2006). Despite this, semi-structured interviews can provide a rich amount of information which can provide an opportunity to ask follow up questions.

Although I had a script with open ended questions I found that, when listening back to the interviews, I would often start to use closed questions and even assert participants constructions for them. On reflection I need to be more mindful of the language used when engaging in dialogue with others, especially when trying to elicit their views and perceptions. After transcribing the pilot interviews I tried to be mindful for subsequent interviews that I was gathering participant constructions rather than imposing my own on them. I wanted to ensure that I was "speaking with" rather than "speaking for" people (Fielding, 2004, p.305). This is something which I have become more aware of in my professional practice, as a consequence of completing the research. In fact, I have become more conscious of my bad habit of speaking over people, in my personal life. Much to my partner's joy, this is something which I am trying to correct!

Data analysis

Willig (2001) suggests that data analysed in semi-structured interviews can be analysed in a number of different ways that are compatible with data analysis. I decided to analyse my data using thematic analysis. I had chosen to use thematic analysis as a method to reflect reality and to expound individuals' constructions of reality (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, conducted within a constructionist framework, seeks to theorise the socio-cultural contexts that enable the individuals' accounts in the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I had considerably underestimated the length of time that transcription would take me, despite reflecting during my small scale research project that transcription takes a long time. I attempted to use different transcription programmes, such as inscribe and dragon dictation, but found that they ultimately made the process more difficult for me as I did not feel that I was emerging myself in the data enough. The transcription of data was a vital stage for me to start thinking about coding and initial themes. Easton et al. (2000) suggest that the researcher should both conduct the interviews and transcribe the data. This would help to restrict the errors in data, such as inaccurate punctuation of substituted words, both of which can alter the meaning of the text. Consequently I chose to transcribe the data myself, whilst drawing out initial codes. I tried to ensure that data analysis could take place when there were no other conflicting demands on my time, but I often found it challenging to put time aside and not have placement work take over my research days. This has strengthened my resolve that I need to be firm with my work boundaries.

The qualitative approach may be criticised for providing a 'snapshot' of one particular group in a specific context, and therefore the results are difficult to generalise to a main population. The themes constructed in my piece of research may be completely different if the research was conducted with a population of non-vulnerable children, for example. However, the themes found in the data set were supportive of the existing literature regarding transition, so

it was felt that the constructs were representative of year six pupils who were about to start their transition journey.

I think it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge my personal circumstances during the research process, and the possible implications that this may have had on my analysis. I experienced a period of anxiety and depression during my final year of the doctorate. Given that the research was investigating anxiety I felt that I needed to manage my personal circumstances in a way that would allow me to maintain an objective stance. I feel that I needed to acknowledge the role of myself as a researcher, and how my own constructions impacted on which data that I felt was relevant, how I coded the data, and which data units I associated with each other to form themes. Through reflexivity, I considered myself to be an active component of the research process, and consequently my own involvement would have an impact on the research. By acknowledging that my own wellbeing may influence the way that I interpreted the data I felt that I was more aware of the risk of having a bias towards 'finding anxiety' in the data set, and dismissing positive constructs. I felt that this awareness was a positive step in remaining balanced when analysing the data. In addition to reflecting on my own thoughts and feelings at the time of data analysis, I sought advice from some of my peers on the doctorate who explored the data set and my themes before giving constructive feedback.

I was not confident in using quantitative methodologies, and at several points during the research I felt quite disempowered at times and almost developed a learned helplessness. I had not conducted research involving quantitative analysis since my undergraduate degree, and I felt a sense of conscious incompetence when it came to analysis. I found it quite difficult to change my perception on this by myself, and definitely credit the support of peers and the University Staff for being able to increase my feeling of competence. On reflection I realise that I should have had a clearer understanding of how I would analyse my data before I submitted

my research proposal. I have come to realise that having a strong understanding of the entire data process (from collection to analysis to reporting) is an integral part of the formation of research, rather than something to be considered further down the line.

It may be suggested that the use of non-parametric tests during statistical analysis was superficial. However, the method I chose was what I considered to be a best fit in terms of achieving the aims of the research, answering the research questions, and working with a 'real world' sample which did not meet the assumptions of normal distribution.

Summary

The reflective summary aimed to provide an overview of the contribution to knowledge made by the current research and offer a critical account of the research process. Due to the word limit, the reflections shared are by no means exhaustive. Despite this, it is hoped that my key reflections and themes which informed my research choices are made clear to the reader in a way that rationalises the reasoning for the research and the underpinning factors which informed my process.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bryman, A. (2006a). Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research: How Is It Done? *Qualitative Research*, 6, 97–113
- Boyle, C., & Lauchlan, F. (2009). Applied psychology and the case for individual casework: Some reflections on the role of the educational psychologist. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25 (1), 71-84
- Call, K.T., & Mortimer, J.T. (2001). *Arenas of Comfort in Adolescence: A Study of Adjustment in Context*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.
- Charmaz, K. (1995). Between positivism and post modernism. Implications for methods. *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, 17, 43-72.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge Falmer
- Christensen, P., & Prout, A. (2002). Working with ethical symmetry in social research with children. *Childhood*, 9, 477-497.
- DfES (2003). *Evaluation of the Vulnerable Children Grant*. Available online (<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR592.pdf>) [accessed 06.01.14].
- Hammersley, M. (2002) *Educational research, policymaking and practice*. London, Paul Chapman/Sage.
- Hodson, P., Baddely, A., Laycock, S., & Williams, S. (2005). Helping secondary schools to be more inclusive of year 7 pupils with SEN. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 21, 53-67.
- Howe, A. (2011). Introduction: Exploring the great divide. In A. Howe and V. Richards (Eds): *Bridging the Transition from Primary to Secondary School*. New York: Routledge.
- Jindal-Snape, D. and Foggie, J. (2008). A Holistic Approach to Primary-Secondary Transitions. *Improving Schools*, 11, 5-18.

Jindal-Snape, D. and Miller, D.J. (2008). A Challenge of Living? Understanding the Psycho-Social Processes of the Child during Primary-secondary Transition through Resilience and Self-Esteem Theories. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20, 217-236.

Johnson, R.B., & Turner, L.A. (2003). *Data collection strategies in mixed-methods research*. In A. Tashakkori, and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research* (pp. 297-319). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mertens, D.M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods*. London: Sage Publications.

Midgley, C. & Maehr, M. L. (1998). *The Michigan Middle School Study: Report to Participating Schools and Districts*, MI: University of Michigan.

Morrison, I. (2000). School's great-apart from the lessons: Sustaining the excitement of post-transfer. *Improving schools*, 3, 46-49.

Rice, F., Fredrickson, N., & Seymour, J. (2011). Assessing Pupil concerns about transition to secondary school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 244-263.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research* (3rd ed.). Padstow, Great Britain: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Spielberger, C. D., Gorsuch, R. L., & Lushene, R. E. (1970). *State-trait anxiety inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologist's Press.

Simmons, R.G., & Blythe, D.A., (1987). *Moving into Adolescence: The Impact of Pubertal Change and School Context*. Hawthorn, NY, Aldine and Gruyler.

Sutherland, R., Yee, W., McNess E. and Harris R. (2010). *Supporting Learning in the Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools*. University of Bristol.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage.

Thomasson, R., Field, L., O'Donnell, C., & Woods, S. (2006). *School Concerns Questionnaire*. Buckinghamshire: Buckinghamshire County Council.

Topping, K. (2011). Primary-Secondary Transition: Differences between Teachers' and Children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14, 268-285.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Berkshire, United Kingdom: Open University Press.